



**StriveTogether**<sup>®</sup>  
Every child. Cradle to career.

# **Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Playbook: Early Grade Reading**



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## Authors

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# Introduction

Learning begins long before a child enters school. The foundation laid in the early grades — kindergarten, first, second and third grade — plays a crucial role in increasing opportunities for all youth through reading development. Research shows that children who develop strong early reading skills are far more likely to excel in school and succeed in life. However, significant disparities in access to high-quality early education, well-trained teachers knowledgeable in the Science of Reading, effective curricula, aligned interventions and enrichment support, resources, and community systems contribute to differing outcomes depending on children's racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Building a foundation for early literacy requires a coordinated community effort, including investments in education, health care, neighborhoods and access to supportive environments. Community-based organizations can drive this effort, aligning stakeholders toward a shared goal: ensuring all children are on track for reading success by the end of third grade.

To do this effectively, community leaders need evidence-based insights on what drives early literacy development, but accessing this information can be challenging. Leaders often spend valuable time conducting research when they could be engaging with their communities. Consider three real examples:

- An organization is launching a new early literacy initiative and needs a comprehensive

understanding of the key factors that influence early reading success.

- A group is leading a community-wide discussion on early literacy efforts and requires evidence-based practices to guide the conversation.
- A school district is enhancing its after-school and summer programs and wants to understand how to align these efforts to strong literacy instruction to select the best programs.

This playbook serves as a comprehensive guide to the latest research and best practices on early grade reading. It equips community leaders with the tools to identify opportunities, co-design effective strategies with their communities and build support for collective investment in early literacy.

The playbook is organized around 23 essential questions that help communities understand their starting point and identify potential focus areas. Each question aligns to research-based topics that support early grade reading and offers a menu of possible indicators to track, as well as practices and policies to implement. These indicators, practices and policies have been compiled from a variety of frameworks with sources indicated in parenthesis.

See example on next page.



# Introduction

## >>>>>> Example

### Essential Question

*Areas to focus*

**Are young learners mastering the five pillars of early literacy?**

### Indicators

*Metrics to track*

#### Phonemic awareness:

Students learn to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in words.

#### Phonics:

Readers learn the predictable relationships between sounds (phonemes) and the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language.

#### Fluency:

Readers learn to read text accurately and quickly, and with appropriate expression to show they understand emphasis and tone.

#### Vocabulary:

Readers have vast knowledge of words and their meanings.

#### Reading comprehension skills:

Readers learn to unlock the meaning of text because they can decode the words on the page and simultaneously understand the meaning of those words.

*Early literacy assessments can track all five pillars while breaking down results by pillar.*

### Practices and Policies

*Actions to take*

#### Practices:

Systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction has the greatest benefits when it begins in kindergarten or first grade ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

Teachers leverage strategies to teach phonemic awareness, including blending phonemes with letters helps them decode, teaching children phonemic segmentation, letter shapes, names, and sounds so that they can use letters to acquire phonemic awareness ([National Reading Panel](#)).

Repeated oral reading procedures had a consistent, and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension as measured by a variety of test instruments and at a range of grade levels ([National Reading Panel](#)).

For students to develop deep content knowledge and expertise that sticks, vocabulary and knowledge must be taught intentionally and systematically by spending extended classroom time reading, listening to, and discussing multiple texts on the same topic ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension leads to increased awareness and use of the strategies, improved performance on commonly used comprehension measures, and, sometimes, higher scores on standardized tests of reading ([National Reading Panel](#)).

#### Policies:

Defining reading: Developing effective literacy policy requires reaching agreement on the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are necessary for learning to read and becoming a confident reader ([Shanker Institute](#)).

Tennessee's legislature passed the Tennessee Literacy Success Act in 2021. Among its provisions was one requiring school districts and public charter schools to use a phonics-based approach for early reading instruction ([Bellwether](#)).

# Science of Reading Overview and Importance

The Science of Reading is built on decades of rigorous research exploring how the human brain acquires reading skills. In 1997, the United States Congress tasked the U.S. Department of Education with establishing the National Reading Panel to synthesize existing research and identify effective methods for teaching children to read. This panel, composed of 14 experts — including school leaders, teachers and reading scientists — analyzed over 100,000 studies on reading instruction.

Their findings provided clear, evidence-based guidance on the most effective approaches to teaching reading. The panel identified four essential components of reading instruction:

- Explicit instruction in phonemic awareness: the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words;
- Systematic phonics instruction: teaching the relationships between letters and sounds;
- Strategies to improve fluency: the ability to read with speed, accuracy and expression; and
- Techniques to enhance comprehension: understanding and interpreting the meaning of text.

This groundbreaking work defined a structured, evidence-based approach to reading instruction, commonly referred to as the “Science of Reading.” These findings emphasized the importance of teaching the five pillars of literacy — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

## Why the Science of Reading matters

The Science of Reading has profound implications for educators, learners and education systems.

It offers a shared framework for teaching and assessing reading, guiding educators on:

- How to effectively teach foundational literacy skills,
- What to prioritize in early reading curricula,
- How to monitor student progress to ensure reading proficiency by the end of third grade, and
- Where to focus professional development efforts for teachers.

As states increasingly adopt Science of Reading policies, many have begun implementing teacher training programs, updating curriculum standards and revising teacher preparation requirements to align with these research-backed practices. These measures aim to ensure that all students, regardless of background, receive high-quality reading instruction that builds the skills essential for lifelong learning.

To date, state legislation on the Science of Reading primarily focuses on increasing teachers’ knowledge through preparation and professional development. However, effective implementation also requires a broader infrastructure. This includes professional development aligned with specific high-quality curricula and ensuring principals have the necessary expertise to support instructional changes. Without these elements, teachers may face disproportionate responsibility for improving literacy instruction ([Shanker Institute](#)).

By grounding reading instruction in proven methods, the Science of Reading offers a clear path to improved literacy outcomes for all students.

# Essential Questions for Early Grade Reading

**Early grade reading progress.** Mastering the five pillars of early literacy in kindergarten through third grade lays a strong foundation for reading proficiency by the end of third grade and sets students up for continued academic success in the years that follow.

- 1 Are young learners demonstrating the academic progress needed to be considered “on track” for early grades?
- 2 Are young learners mastering the five pillars of early literacy?
- 3 Are young learners meeting reading benchmarks for third grade?

**Leadership for literacy.** Local Education Agencies (LEAs) need leaders with a clear vision for advancing literacy in their districts and a strategy for implementing effective instructional practices across all schools.

- 4 Does the LEA have a clear vision and strategy for advancing early literacy aligned to the Science of Reading?
- 5 Has the LEA adopted standards and coherent curricular materials aligned to the vision?
- 6 Does the LEA use quality data and assessment resources consistently, coherently and strategically to drive instructional decision making for all students?

**Teaching and learning.** Schools with well-trained, specialized early literacy teams with representative teachers can effectively facilitate a flexible, equitable and culturally relevant literacy program.

- 7 Does each school have a well-trained, specialized early literacy team to facilitate a flexible, equitable literacy program?
- 8 Does the school maximize and direct time to continuously improve the effectiveness of instruction and intervention?
- 9 Are teachers and schools making significant contributions to academic growth for students?
- 10 Do students have effective, representative teachers and leaders?
- 11 Do students have access to curricula aligned to the Science of Reading research and that includes explicit phonics instruction?
- 12 Do students attend school in systems with adequate funding to support curricula, professional learning and ongoing coaching needed to implement the Science of Reading?
- 13 Do students have access to teachers trained, coached and supported to teach the Science of Reading?
- 14 Are students who are behind grade level identified early and provided high-quality interventions aligned to the curriculum?

**Experiences and neighborhood conditions.** Children who grow up in literacy-focused, resource-rich neighborhoods experience healthy development and cultivate a lifelong joy of reading.

- 15 Do families live in well-resourced neighborhoods (including well-resourced and accessible libraries)?
- 16 Do families with children have access to adequate public support?
- 17 Do students have a literacy-rich environment and routines at home (e.g., books in the home, children being read to)?
- 18 Do students have access to quality after-school and summer enrichment programming to reinforce classroom learning and prevent learning loss?



**Positive school environments.** Positive, literacy-rich school environments create the conditions for safety, belonging, inclusivity and support by focusing on holistic child development and approaches. Young learners want to attend school consistently when environments are positive and supportive.

19	Do young learners attend schools with safe, inclusive and supportive environments?
20	Do young learners attend schools that prioritize their social, emotional and physical development and well-being?
21	Are young learners demonstrating consistent attendance?
22	Are there young learners who disproportionately experience exclusionary discipline?
23	Are young learners demonstrating positive behavior?

This guide is not intended to serve as a checklist. Rather, communities should use the essential questions to explore options and choose what works for them.

# The Case for Early Grade Reading

Marked as one of the important skills in contemporary society, early grade reading is a foundational skill for school-based learning and is associated with future academic success and life outcomes. Reading and comprehension in early elementary school years is critical for a positive academic trajectory, not only in language arts courses but in all subjects ([CCSSO 2019](#)). A longitudinal study on the relationship between third grade reading, high school performance and college enrollment found that students who were at or above grade level in third grade graduate from high school and attend college at higher rates than their peers who were below grade level ([Lesnick et al. 2010](#)). Moreover, students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to leave high school without a diploma, and these rates are higher among students experiencing poverty ([Hernandez 2012](#)).

Beyond academic outcomes, substantial evidence indicates students that establish basic reading skills by third grade have better social skills and behavioral outcomes ([NCES](#)). For example, students with higher literacy achievement are less likely to be aggressive ([Miles and Stipek 2005](#)), and reading achievement in third grade predicted subsequent behavioral engagement (i.e., positive efforts and involvement with academic activities) in fifth grade, with higher effects among students experiencing poverty ([Feister 2013](#), [Guo et al. 2015](#)).

The impact of poor reading proficiency is greatest for young learners living in poverty. According to the Annie E. Casey report, [Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters](#), 74% of fourth grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were from low-income households. The reality is early grade reading proficiency in the United States continues to be

unacceptably low for students living in poverty and students of color ([Annie E. Casey, 2013](#)). The percentage Black, Hispanic and Native American students who scored below proficient on the 2024 NAEP fourth grade reading test was very high (83%, 80% and 86% percent, respectively) and much larger than the share of white or Asian/Pacific Islander students (61% and 49% percent) ([NAEP](#)).

## What does early grade reading proficiency mean?



Foundational reading skills, which are collectively referred to as “decoding,” help early readers understand how letters, sounds and words work. These skills are the building blocks of reading. Unlike other content areas that can be explored and taught in a variety of ways, foundational reading skills are defined, finite and can be fully mastered ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

Foundational reading skills are:

- Concepts of print: Readers learn how books are organized and the key features of print. The most important early print concept is letter recognition. This skill also includes page-by-page reading, reading from left to right, top to bottom and noticing that words are separated by spaces (Achieve the Core).
- Phonological awareness: A term used for all things related to sounds of spoken language. Phonological awareness is entirely oral (no letters or written words) and forms the foundation for reading. Students learn to hear, identify and manipulate units of oral language, including words, syllables and other word parts.
- Phonemic awareness: Phonemic awareness is part of phonological awareness that focuses on phonemes, or individual sounds. Students learn

to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in words. Some phonemes correspond to letters while others correspond with multiple letters, like the sound /sh/ makes. Children learn to hear, think about and work with the sounds they hear in words. Phonemic awareness must be explicitly taught and is required for reading.

- Phonics: Readers learn the predictable relationships between sounds (phonemes) and the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language. Phonics is the act of connecting individual sounds with letters.
- Spelling: Students use their knowledge of phonics to accurately write the letters to represent the sounds they hear in words.
- Fluency: Readers learn to read words accurately, quickly and with appropriate expression to show they understand emphasis and tone. Fluency is the link between decoding and comprehension, allowing the brain to shift from “sounding out words” to understanding meaning of words, sentences and paragraphs.

Early readers do not need to fully master all foundational literacy skills before they can begin building vocabulary and practicing comprehension. While they are developing these foundational skills, they should simultaneously engage with texts that expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of language and ideas. In fact, comprehension is strengthened when students are exposed to rich, meaningful texts that challenge their thinking and introduce new concepts, even as they continue developing their foundational skills.

- Vocabulary: Readers have vast knowledge of words and their meanings.
- Reading comprehension skills: Readers learn to unlock the meaning of text because they can decode the words on the page and simultaneously understand the meaning of those words.

# About the Early Grade Reading Playbook

StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Early Grade Reading synthesizes leading research, indicators and evidence-based practices to promote equitable outcomes in early reading across communities. While the playbook builds on existing frameworks that are valuable in their own right, it does not replace them. Instead, it serves as a comprehensive tool that guides you to resources in areas where deeper exploration is needed. Communities can use the 23 essential questions to navigate to topics relevant to their specific needs, interests and goals.



## The Education-to-Workforce Framework and supporting research



[Mathematica's Education-to-Workforce Framework](#) is the inspiration behind the playbook's organization and content. StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Early Grade Reading includes all of the applicable research, content and aligned essential questions included in the Education-

to-Workforce Framework. It is also organized in a similar way. The playbook supplements the Education-to-Workforce Framework by incorporating research on early childhood reading development, strategies for improving reading outcomes in grades K-3, the need for high-quality, trained representative educators and more. Additional practices and policies expand on the Education-to-Workforce Framework to incorporate the Science of Reading research and to improve accessibility for community-based organizations. Sixty-five percent (40 out of 62) of the indicators, practices and policies included in the Early Grade Reading Playbook come from the Education-to-Workforce Framework.

# About the playbook structure



The playbook is organized around 23 essential questions that help communities understand their starting point and identify potential focus areas. Each question offers a menu of possible practices and policies to implement, as well as key indicators to track.

## Essential questions: areas to focus

The 23 essential questions help communities ask and answer questions that help them identify areas where co-designed solutions can improve early reading outcomes. The content of each question provides starting points for designing and collaborating on solutions. Inspired by and aligned with the Education-to-Workforce Framework, these questions are clear, offer various entry points for communities and provide an organizing structure for elaboration.

The playbook includes close to 1,000 indicators, policies and practices, though implementing all of them is neither necessary nor intended. Each community has its own unique assets, needs and resources. StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Early Grade Reading helps communities identify key metrics to track, pinpoint effective strategies and determine where to start, enabling them to steadily improve early literacy for all young learners over time.

## Indicators: metrics to track



Contributing indicators help communities see what it looks like when early reading outcomes improve for learners across a community. Contributing indicators are valuable because research shows

they influence outcomes in a positive direction and are measured at the individual learner level (e.g., percentage of third graders scoring proficient in reading). They can help communities establish student-centered priorities and provide information earlier than outcome data is available, allowing communities to know if an initiative is working and to support continuous improvement of multiple initiatives.

Systems indicators help communities track the supports that influence outcomes at the system level, such as district, city, county or state efforts. These indicators are crucial because they allow communities to monitor the system, identify gaps and address them proactively. Measured at the family, caregiver or geographic level, systems indicators reflect institutional actions and their impact. For example, the percentage of eligible families with access to a library within walking distance is a key system indicator that reveals how well resources are distributed.

## Practices and policies: actions to take



Practices and policies describe what can be done at every level of the system. Practices are evidence-based efforts, like teacher professional development, that create strong conditions for results. Policies are laws, regulations, procedures, administrative actions or incentives of governments or other institutions. Communities may see a policy listed that is currently not enacted in their district, city or state, offering an opportunity to align on advocacy efforts. Federal policies are listed to create awareness so communities can leverage or utilize them to support state and local efforts.

Scaling a solution often has a lifecycle that starts with a local practice that is proven effective, scaled locally (e.g., scaled from a classroom to a district, then to another district), and then used to inform the creation of a state-level policy that provides



access to funding for further scaling. This approach is outlined within the StriveTogether Theory of Action™. This playbook categorizes strategies into a practice or policy. But, a practice can turn into a policy over time, or a policy can initiate a practice if it comes first. Lines begin to blur as scale takes over.

Not every contributing indicator has an identified systems indicator, practice or policy. That may be a result of limited research available or identified to date. Indicators, practices and policies can help answer multiple essential questions, but for simplicity, we've grouped each indicator with one essential question. To help communities choose the most relevant indicators for their context, each indicator is presented as it appears in its original source. This allows communities to understand the specific nuances that may be important to them. However, this approach means the language of indicators may vary, some may be duplicated across different sources, and language choices may need to change based on local preferences.

This resource aims to be a library of evidence-based indicators and implementation strategies that can be used with community groups, referenced during annual planning and leveraged to prioritize initiatives as needed. Its purpose is to help you and your community understand possible levers at every level — learner, neighborhood, school, district, city and state — to improve early literacy outcomes.

## How to use this playbook



How this playbook is used will be different for each organization or community, depending on their planning process, goals and priorities. The playbook might be shared with a community working group in its entirety, referenced internally as a way to brainstorm potential solutions to discuss with others or leveraged in various other

ways. After reading it, leaders can ask: How do we want to use this with our community?

This resource does not replace the voice and perspective of community members, who often know the solutions that will work best in their communities. Instead, consider this playbook a resource that community members can also access to support the co-designing of solutions and to inform your planning. For support on engaging with your community, visit StriveTogether's Results-Based Facilitation 101 course, available for free on the Training Hub.

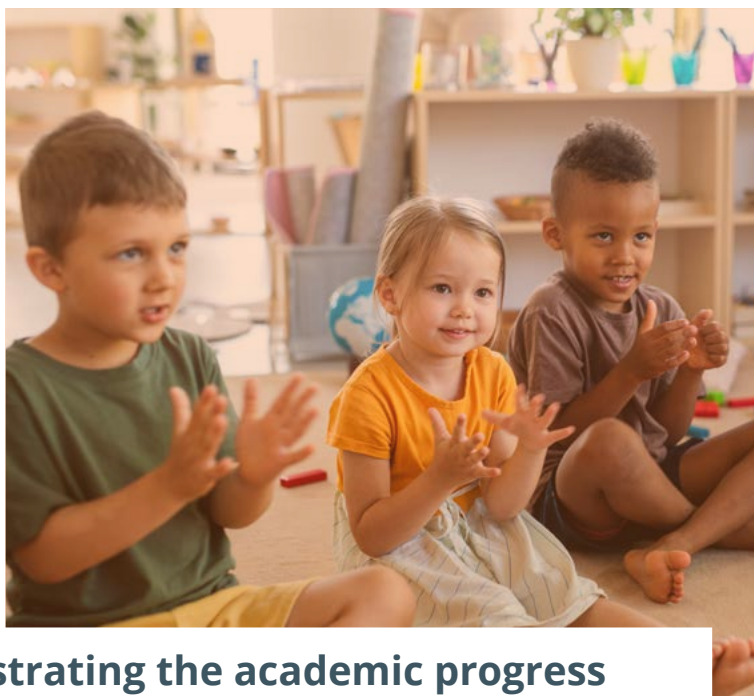
This playbook offers several practical uses for community organizations. It can be used to onboard new staff or introduce organizations to cradle-to-career work. It helps explore aligned practices and policies, guiding the selection of working group topics and potential solutions. Communities can share the entire playbook with working groups or community members to support exploration and implementation. Additionally, it serves as a valuable resource during internal reviews for annual goal-setting and planning. Finally, this playbook can be used alongside other StriveTogether resources for a more comprehensive approach. If you are interested in diving deeper into the research supporting the indicators, visit the citations included throughout the playbook. The appendix also includes an annotated bibliography.

We encourage you to adapt the language of the indicators, practices, and policies to reflect your local community's values and priorities. The examples provided remain true to their original sources, so you may notice different terms used to express similar ideas.

Due to the limited research on place-based partnerships, StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Early Grade Reading highlights initiatives and examples from StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network members making clear progress on their early literacy outcomes, illustrating what has worked for them.

# Early Grade Reading Progress

Mastering the five pillars of early literacy in kindergarten through second grade lays a strong foundation for reading proficiency by the end of third grade and sets students up for continued academic success in the years that follow.



1

**Are young learners demonstrating the academic progress needed to be considered “on track” for early grades?**

## Why it matters



“On-track” measures in kindergarten, first and second grade can help schools target additional support to students at risk of not meeting grade-level proficiency standards in third grade, which is a strong predictor of later outcomes. For example, a study in three diverse urban districts found that math and reading benchmark performance and growth and chronic absenteeism in grades K–2 were important and consistent predictors for reading success in third grade. ([Education-to-Workforce](#))

Enrollment in a high-quality pre-K program can meaningfully enhance children’s early learning and

development, producing long-term improvements in school success and generating benefits to both individuals and society that far exceed the costs. The positive effects of access to quality pre-K on children’s math and reading achievement are even larger in districts with a majority of Black students ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Compared to children in lower-quality child care and early education programs, children in higher-quality programs have more advanced language and pre-math skills, more advanced social skills and warmer relationships with their teachers. Elements of quality include well-trained and well-compensated teachers, language-rich classroom environments,



small group sizes, low staff-to-child ratios, low staff turnover rates and practices that involve and support parents ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).

Disparities in children's early grade literacy outcomes along income and race are clear, pointing to the need for early, focused intervention. For instance, a study of nationally-representative data found that at the start of first grade, Black children's reading proficiency was three months behind that of white children, and math proficiency was almost five months behind; these disparities were only slightly smaller for Latine children.

Multilingual learners (MLs) may initially score lower on phonemic awareness and phonics assessments, especially if their home language has different phonetic structures or writing systems (e.g., Spanish vs. Chinese). They may take longer to develop vocabulary and oral language proficiency in English,

which impacts reading comprehension assessments. It is equally important to support MLs home-language acquisition. MLs who have strong literacy skills in their home language tend to acquire English reading skills more quickly. Studies show that bilingualism can strengthen cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness, benefiting long-term reading success. Once they acquire foundational English skills, MLs often show accelerated reading growth, sometimes outpacing monolingual peers in later grades. Standard reading benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS, MAP Growth, i-Ready) may not fully capture MLs' progress since these assessments are normed for English-dominant students.

Using tools to monitor early readers' progress across the five pillars of early literacy helps identify student needs accurately and provide targeted, timely interventions, ensuring they master foundational literacy skills.

## Enrollment in quality pre-kindergarten programs *Key source: Education-to-Workforce Framework*



*This section is an abbreviated version of what is in the StriveTogether Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Playbook: Kindergarten Readiness. For a more comprehensive list of indicators, policies and practices about enrollment in quality pre-K programs, see the [StriveTogether Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Playbook: Kindergarten Readiness](#).*

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of eligible students enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs of the total number of 3- and 4-year-olds using the data sets at [schoolfinancedata.org](#) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of eligible students enrolled in state-funded Early Head Start ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) in poverty who are enrolled in Early Head Start ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Percentage of children without access to Early Head Start ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Average length of enrollment for children from focal populations. In the STEP Forward with Data Framework by Child Trends, "focal populations" refer to specific groups of children, families, and workforce members within the preschool system who are the focus of equity efforts ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of families from focal populations who report no barriers to enrolling children in the program of their choice ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Number of 3- and 4-year-olds receiving special education in schools/centers in the state ([NIEER](#)).
- Share of children enrolled in nursery school or preschool. Quality preschool helps families prepare their children to start school ready to learn, with the cognitive and social skills required to succeed in academic settings and beyond ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Systems indicators

- Percentage of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in public pre-K ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of child care providers not participating in the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of program sites that offer at least two types of supportive enrollment resources to families, especially families from focal populations, to support enrollment in the programs families want to attend ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Availability of preschool openings for the number of children who want to attend preschool, especially those from focal populations ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Expand access to high quality child care, Early/Head Start and full day pre-K in a variety of settings (i.e., homes, centers, and schools). ([Alliance for Early Success](#))
- Provision of high-quality resources, networks, services, supports, and programming to help children develop on track between birth and

third grade ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Universal access to, and greater use of, high-quality programs for child care, early learning, school readiness, pre-school, K-3, after-school, and summer learning experiences ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

### Policies

- Early Head Start: Federally-funded early preschool program for children aged 3 or younger ([Results for America](#) and [Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Head Start: Federally-funded preschool program with significant flexibility in service design ([Results for America](#)).
- State subsidizes Early Head Start and Head Start ([National Education Association](#)).
- High-quality, universal pre-kindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year old children ([New America](#)).
- Increase access and funding for 3-year-old children ([NIEER](#)).
  - › Raise income eligibility threshold for high-quality child care and preschool to include more families as eligible ([Center for American Progress](#)).
  - › Reimburse providers based on enrollment instead of attendance ([Center for American Progress](#)).

## Access to full-day Kindergarten

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of eligible students in full-day, five-day-per-week kindergarten ([National Education Association](#)).
- Child participates in a transitional kindergarten program ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#); [Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

- Percentage of entering first graders who previously attended full-day kindergarten ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of schools and districts offering kindergarten programs that are six hours per day for five days per week ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percent of schools and/or districts offering full-day kindergarten ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Support families to access high quality full-day kindergarten and grades 1-3 ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

## Policies

- Districts provide full-day, five-day-per-week kindergarten ([National Education Association](#)).
- Full-day kindergarten: Formal, school-based education for children ages 4 to 6 ([Results for America](#)).

- State funds full-day kindergarten, at minimum, at the same level as grades 1 to 12 ([National Education Association](#)).
- State requires mandatory attendance for all eligible students ([National Education Association](#)).
- State requires that districts provide full-day, five-day-per-week kindergarten ([National Education Association](#)).

## Kindergarten Readiness

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Children who are developmentally ready (cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally) to succeed in school at the time of school entry. ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#))
- Children ready in all five domains of development as measured by kindergarten surveys/assessments ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)): *Language and Literacy Development, Cognition and General Knowledge, Approaches towards Learning, Physical Well-Being and Motor Development, Social Emotional Development and Executive Functioning*.
- Number and percent of children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning as determined using developmentally-appropriate early learning measures ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).
- Percentage of students demonstrating readiness at kindergarten entry ([National Education Association](#)).
- Participation in a transitional kindergarten program ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Results from kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).
  - › Percentage of children from focal<sup>1</sup> populations meeting benchmarks across all developmental domains (language/literacy, cognition, social emotional development, approaches to learning and physical development) ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
  - › Percentage of families from focal populations who report that their program offers transition supports that meet their needs ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
  - › Percentage of children meeting benchmarks on a teacher-reported kindergarten readiness assessment, such as: Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Language and Literacy Development domain; Ready 4 Kindergarten Early Learning Assessment (R4K ELA) Language and Literacy domain; Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) Language and Literacy subscales. ([EW Framework](#))

<sup>1</sup>"Focal" population is defined by local communities, typically considering historically marginalized populations and local data points.

- › Percentage of children meeting benchmarks on direct child assessments administered by trained assessors, such as: Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Early Cognition and Academic Development (ECAD) LetterWord and Writing subtests; Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) Early Literacy assessment ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Systems indicators

- Percentage of kindergarten teachers surveyed indicating alignment between early learning programs and kindergarten ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of parents surveyed who received transition information from their district ([National Education Association](#)).
- School readiness assessment is administered to all students at kindergarten entry ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of schools with formal working transition plans between early childhood settings and kindergarten ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Transition to kindergarten ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of programs that minimize the number of transitions when supporting children with learning accommodations ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

students and their families ([National Education Association](#)).

- Local organizations (a trusted source), districts and/or states educate parents on the skills needed to be kindergarten ready ([Chattanooga 2.0](#)).

## Policies

- State and/or district adopts and requires a common kindergarten readiness assessment.
- State has a policy outlining transition from early learning programs to elementary schools ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for transition activities ([National Education Association](#)).
- State-funded pre-K programs implement early childhood curricula aligned with state pre-K through third grade early learning standards ([National Education Association](#)).
  - › State-subsidized early learning programs are required to implement early childhood curricula that are aligned with state pre-K through third grade early learning standards ([National Education Association](#)).
  - › State-subsidized early learning programs receive funds for joint professional learning activities for child care providers as well as pre-K and kindergarten teachers ([National Education Association](#)).

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Districts conduct transition activities for pre-K students and their families ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide joint professional learning activities for child care providers as well as pre-K and kindergarten teachers ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide transition information to pre-K

<sup>3</sup> “Focal” population is defined by local communities, typically considering historically marginalized populations and local data points.



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students in grades 1 and 2 meeting grade-level math and reading benchmarks, with an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher, and no in- or out-of-school suspensions or expulsions ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Children who are prepared to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of third grade ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Percentage of students proficient in core academic subjects ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).
- Children ages 6 to 17 who repeated one or more grades since starting kindergarten. (Data source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, “The National Survey of Children’s Health.”) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- so that experiences at each stage (age birth to 3, birth to 5, pre-kindergarten, and K-3) build on the previous one and lay essential groundwork for the one to come ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Develop a coherent system of early care and education that aligns, integrates, and coordinates what happens from birth through third grade so children are ready to take on the learning tasks associated with fourth grade and beyond ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Align curriculum, standards, and assessments starting in pre-K through grade three ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Promote transition planning from early care, to preschool, to K-12 learning environments ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Teach foundational reading skills early — in kindergarten or the first grade. Teaching these skills has been shown to be more effective than other approaches in helping to prevent reading difficulties, especially among low-income students, students with learning disabilities (particularly dyslexia), and other children who lack access to a high-quality early literacy environment. These skills are especially helpful for word recognition skills, which contribute to strong reading comprehension ([Bellwether](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Schools and early childhood centers develop consistent, aligned expectations for children’s healthy development from birth through third grade that link early childhood, child care, preschool, and K-3 education. This would include a focus on children’s healthy social-emotional development, as well as cognitive development ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Schools and early childhood centers develop seamless transitions between each stage on the child development and education continuum

### Policies

- State and / or district allocates funding to programs to ensure positive achievement outcomes for all students, including strategies to reduce opportunity and learning gaps ([National Education Association](#)).





## 2

## Are young learners mastering the five pillars of early literacy?

### Why it matters



Mastering the five pillars of literacy — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension — is critical for students to achieve reading proficiency by third grade, a key predictor of future academic success. Research shows that third grade reading proficiency is strongly correlated with long-term educational and economic outcomes. A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) found that students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Additionally, the National Institute for Literacy emphasizes that these five pillars form the foundation of strong reading skills, enabling students to transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” across all subjects.

Without these skills, students struggle with comprehension, limiting their ability to engage with complex texts in later grades. Early literacy proficiency is also linked to higher lifetime earnings and reduced incarceration rates (Hernandez, 2011), underscoring its broader societal impact. Therefore, ensuring students master these literacy components by third grade is essential for their long-term success.

The good news is we know that by the end of first grade, more than 95% of all children can be taught to read. Intervention research has identified the conditions that enable every child to acquire proficient reading skills ([Instruction Partners](#)).

### Early grades on track

**1. Phonemic Awareness:** The awareness of, and ability to focus on, individual sounds, called phonemes. In English, there are approximately 44 phonemes, represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet individually and in combination ([Bellwether](#)).

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Phonemic awareness: Students learn to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in words. For example, a kindergartener can identify the three sounds in the word cat: /k/ /a/ /t/. She can also identify how the word changes if the /k/ sound is replaced with /m/ ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonological awareness: Students learn to hear, identify, and manipulate units of oral language, including words, syllables, and other word parts. For example, a second grader can clap twice to show he can accurately identify the number of syllables he hears in the word “sister”: sis-ter. He can tap three times to count the syllables in “artichoke”: ar-ti-choke. ([SCORE Tennessee](#))



# Practices

## Practices

- Phonemic awareness can be taught. Children learn to hear, think about, and work with the sounds they hear in words ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonemic awareness helps children learn to spell. Students learn to connect sounds to letters in predictable patterns ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonemic awareness is required for reading. It enables children to read words rapidly and accurately, freeing up brain space for comprehension ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- The results of the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis clearly showed that phonemic awareness instruction is effective in teaching children to attend to and manipulate speech sounds in words. Findings of the meta-analysis revealed not only that phonemic awareness can be taught but also that phonemic awareness instruction is effective under a variety of teaching conditions with a variety of learners ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Results of the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis showed that teaching children to manipulate the sounds in language helps them learn to read. Effects of phonemic awareness training on reading lasted well beyond the end of training ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Phonemic awareness instruction produced positive effects on both word reading and pseudoword reading, indicating that it helps children decode novel words as well as remember how to read familiar words. Phonemic awareness training was effective in boosting reading comprehension, although the effect size was smaller than for word reading ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Phonemic awareness instruction helped all types of children improve their reading, including normally developing readers, children at risk for future reading problems, disabled readers, preschoolers, kindergartners, 1st graders, children in 2nd through 6th grades (most of whom were disabled readers), children across various SES levels, and children learning to read in English as well as in other languages ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Teaching phonemic awareness was found to help children learn to spell, and its effect lasted well beyond the end of training. Some but not all types of students benefited from phonemic awareness instruction. It helped kindergartners and 1st graders learn to spell. Phonemic awareness instruction also benefited children at risk for future reading problems and normally developing readers and was effective in boosting spelling skills in low SES as well as mid-to-high SES children. It helped children learn to spell in English as well as children learning in other languages. However, phonemic awareness instruction was not effective for improving spelling in disabled readers. This is consistent with other research indicating that disabled readers have a difficult time learning to spell ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- The National Reading Panel findings indicate that phonemic awareness instruction may be most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes with letters, when the instruction is explicitly focused on one or two types of phoneme manipulations rather than multiple types, and when children are taught in small groups. Of course, instruction must be suited to students' level of development, with easier phonemic awareness tasks appropriate for younger children ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Phonemic awareness instruction does not need to consume long periods of time to be effective. In these analyses, programs lasting less than 20 hours were more effective than longer programs. Single sessions lasted 25 minutes on average. Classroom teachers as well as computers can teach phonemic awareness effectively ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Teachers should recognize that acquiring phonemic awareness is a means rather than an end. Phonemic awareness is not acquired for its own sake but rather for its value in helping learners understand and use the alphabetic system to read and write. This is why it is important to include letters when teaching children to manipulate phonemes and why it is important to teach children explicitly how to apply phonemic awareness skills in reading and writing tasks ([National Reading Panel](#)).

**2. Phonics:** The systematic relationship between the sounds we hear in words (phonemes) and the letters that spell those words (graphemes). Understanding phonics allows students to decode, or sound out words by applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships ([Bellwether](#)).

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Phonics: Readers learn the predictable relationships between sounds (phonemes) and the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language. With phonics, students have a system for remembering how to read and write words ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Effective phonics instruction is explicit: the teacher provides precise and direct instruction ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonics instruction can be differentiated for student needs and is best done in flexible groups to match students' needs and the pace of learning ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonics not only supports decoding and fluency skills; it also boosts reading comprehension, because reading words accurately and automatically allows readers to focus on the meaning of text ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Classrooms support systematic Tier 1 phonics instruction to all students produces overall strong readers, ensuring that students are not left with gaps in their letter-sound knowledge ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Teachers leverage strategies to teach phonemic awareness, including blending phonemes with letters helps them decode, teaching children phonemic segmentation, letter shapes, names, and sounds so that they can use letters to acquire phonemic awareness ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Systematic phonics instruction has the greatest benefits when it begins in kindergarten or first grade ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- The most effective phonics instruction is systemic;

it teaches a clearly defined sequence of the major sound-spelling relationships of consonants and vowels ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

- Lessons provide ample time to practice decoding skills ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Phonics instruction must be embedded in a comprehensive language-rich framework of foundational skills and reading comprehension; in addition to phonics, students should be exposed to oral reading, opportunities to build knowledge and comprehension, and writing ([Bellwether](#)).
- The National Reading Panel's findings support the conclusion that systematic phonics instruction is effective when delivered through tutoring, through small groups, and through teaching classes of students ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when it begins in kindergarten or 1st grade before children have learned to read independently. Phonics instruction taught early proved much more effective than phonics instruction introduced after first grade ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- The conclusion drawn from these findings is that systematic phonics instruction is significantly more effective than non-phonics instruction in helping to prevent reading difficulties among at-risk students and in helping to remediate reading difficulties in disabled readers ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Growth in word-reading skills is strongly enhanced by systematic phonics instruction when compared to non-phonics instruction for kindergartners and 1st graders as well as for older struggling readers. Growth in reading comprehension is also boosted by systematic phonics instruction for younger students and reading disabled students. These findings should dispel any belief that teaching phonics systematically to young children interferes with their ability to read and comprehend text ([National Reading Panel](#)).

### 3. Fluency: The ability to read with speed, accuracy, automaticity, and proper expression ([Bellwether](#)).

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Fluency: Readers learn to read text accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression to show they understand emphasis and tone. Fluency is the link between decoding and comprehension ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- The analysis of guided oral reading procedures (i.e. repeated reading, neurological impress, paired reading, shared reading, and assisted reading) led to the conclusion that repeated oral reading procedures had a consistent, and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension as measured by a variety of test instruments and at a range of grade levels ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Repeated reading procedures have a clear impact on the reading ability of non-impaired readers through at least grade 4, as well as on students with various kinds of reading problems throughout high school ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Repeated oral reading with feedback and guidance leads to meaningful improvements in reading expertise for students — for good readers as well as those who are experiencing difficulties ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Teachers need to know that word recognition accuracy is not the end point of reading instruction. Fluency represents a level of expertise beyond word recognition accuracy, and reading comprehension may be aided by fluency. Skilled readers read words accurately, rapidly and efficiently. Children who do not develop reading fluency, no matter how bright they are, will continue to read slowly and with great effort ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- The National Reading Panel found that a range of well-described instructional approaches to encouraging repeated oral reading result in increased reading proficiency. In contrast, the NRP did not find evidence supporting the effectiveness of encouraging independent silent reading as a means of improving reading achievement ([National Reading Panel](#)).
- Teachers assess fluency regularly using formative and summative assessments to gauge oral reading accuracy, rate and comprehension ([National Reading Panel](#)).

### 4. Vocabulary: The words students need to recognize and understand when reading, and the processing of new words ([Bellwether](#)).

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Vocabulary: Readers have vast knowledge of words and their meanings. ([SCORE Tennessee](#))

## Practices

### Practices

- For students to develop deep content knowledge and expertise that sticks, vocabulary and knowledge must be taught intentionally and systematically by spending extended classroom time reading, listening to, and discussing multiple texts on the same topic ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

**5. Reading Comprehension:** The ability to understand and interpret what is being read, and both apply and gain knowledge from text as a whole ([Bellwether](#)).

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Reading comprehension skills: Readers learn to unlock the meaning of text because they can decode the words on the page and simultaneously understand the meaning of those words ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Access to grade-appropriate texts in and outside the classroom.

## Practices

### Practices

- Teaching strategies for reading comprehension leads to increased awareness and use of the strategies, improved performance on commonly used comprehension measures, and, sometimes, higher scores on standardized tests of reading ([National Reading Panel](#)).

**Background knowledge:** the prior information, experiences, and concepts that readers bring to a text.

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Background knowledge: Readers accumulate knowledge of the world, facts, and skills to build their background knowledge. They use this background knowledge to make sense of the information they come across through reading ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- For students to develop deep content knowledge and expertise that sticks, vocabulary and knowledge must be taught intentionally and systematically by spending extended classroom time reading, listening to, and discussing multiple texts on the same topic. ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Knowledge-based competencies are rooted in overall language comprehension and help students create meaning from text. They are dynamic and are developed over a reader's lifetime, starting at birth ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Lessons match grade-level standards and are from a systematic scope and sequence, which is outlined in a research-based, high-quality

curriculum that builds skills coherently from grade-level to grade-level ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

- Read-alouds are essential in the early grades to develop students' listening comprehension, build their knowledge of the world, and boost their academic vocabulary. Teachers should read aloud content-rich texts that are two-three grade levels above their current grade to help students grow their knowledge, vocabulary, and oral language skills. Research shows that from birth to about age 13, children's oral language abilities exceed their reading comprehension abilities, meaning children learn more from listening to texts than they do when reading on their own ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Students learn grade-level skills in the foundational skills portion of their literacy block. ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- The texts must offer a rich diet of facts, ideas, and vocabulary words, and not be "trivial literature" or reading selections on fragmented topics ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- While research strongly supports phonics instruction as a key early reading practice to build decoding and word-recognition skills, phonics alone will not support students to be strong, fluent readers. Even at an early age, when language skills are still developing,

students benefit from instruction that builds knowledge and comprehension, exposure to a wide variety of texts, and knowledge building opportunities ([Bellwether](#)).

- Reading comprehension strategies are best taught through integration with content so that students will be better able to understand, analyze, and retain the content as they learn to read ([Bellwether](#)).
- Intentionally sequenced in-depth exposure to complex texts via reading, writing, and discussion builds students' base of knowledge and capacity to understand a wide variety of reading material — which will be imperative as they move through school and into adulthood ([Bellwether](#)).
- Fostering a “love of reading” in children through engaging, culturally relevant texts

supports their motivation to read widely, and reading widely supports their development of critical language skills, including vocabulary, spelling, writing style, and the ability to use and understand complex texts ([Bellwether](#)).

- Approach to Texts, Knowledge Building, and Comprehension: Science of Reading is based on the belief that children need to acquire knowledge of the world beginning in the early years to enable reading comprehension. It begins comprehension-building instruction simultaneously with the development of word recognition. Science of Reading integrates literacy instruction into other subjects, leveraging high-quality, knowledge-rich instructional materials to deepen students' understanding of various topics like science, math, social studies, history, art, etc., via engaging, culturally relevant texts. ([Bellwether](#)).

***Oral language skills: the ability to understand and express spoken language, supporting communication, vocabulary growth, and reading comprehension.***

## Practices

### Practices

- Oral language skills: Students develop command over word form, sentence structure, and discourse. They can make meaning from spoken language using their background knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding of how language is structured ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

- Students learn the correct way to pronounce sounds and words. The teacher's instruction is accurate and clear ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Students practice hearing, saying, reading, and writing their new skills. Lessons provide ample time to practice decoding skills ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

### ***Other foundational reading skills***

## Practices

- Concepts of print: Readers learn how to approach a text and can read left to right and top to bottom on a page ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Spelling: Students use their knowledge of phonics to accurately write the letters to

represent the sounds they hear in words ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

- Children should develop familiarity with the complex syntax of written language ([Bellwether](#)).



### Practices

- Quick learners can go fast and those who need more time get more practice ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Students have fun while they learn. Instruction is engaging, child-friendly and age-appropriate ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Cognitive science shows that we understand and remember the things we pay attention to and think about deeply. When students write about what they have learned from texts, using specific information and vocabulary, they better understand and retain the new content ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Literacy blocks must give time and attention to both sets of competencies — those that build decoding skills and those that build knowledge — in grades K-2. Primary grades must systematically and explicitly teach students the decoding skills required to crack the code of the English language. Early readers need exposure to important background knowledge that they will continue to build upon in later grades and throughout life ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- Students will develop as skilled readers only when given the chance to grow their reading muscles (i.e. the “Matthew Effect”). A high volume of reading increases children’s decoding ability, word knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension. Additionally, as children become more skilled readers, they enjoy reading more and are more motivated to read, which in turn continues to hone their skills ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).
- The handful of strategies that have the most positive impact on comprehension are those that unlock the meaning of the text at hand, such as making connections to prior knowledge, asking questions of the text, summarizing as one reads, and monitoring one’s own comprehension. ([SCORE Tennessee](#)).

### *Policies that support the adoption and implementation of the five pillars of literacy.*

- The [Tennessee Academic Standards](#) are designed to create equitable learning experiences for all students. The standards require that students have rich experiences within the text: building knowledge through reading, using evidence in their writing that can only be found in the text, and learning academic vocabulary found in those very texts. By grounding discussion and writing tasks in the text itself, all students are given equal opportunities to learn and engage. Reading and writing become a shared experience in learning about any topic. ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Defining reading: Developing effective literacy policy requires reaching agreement on the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are necessary for learning to read and becoming a confident reader ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- In SB 1572, Arizona defines the essential components of reading instruction as “explicit and systematic instruction in the following: (a) phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness, (b) phonics encoding and decoding, (c) vocabulary development, (d) reading fluency as demonstrated by automatic reading of text, (e) reading comprehension of written text, (f) written and oral expression, including spelling and handwriting.” ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Grounding reading policy on the five pillars identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension ([Shanker Institute](#)).



- These five pillars, however, should be a starting point. Oral language and writing take a back seat in the legislation but are as essential as the other five. Lawmakers should ensure that they receive the same degree of attention (Model state: Kentucky) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Background knowledge receives very limited attention in the law. It is crucial that legislators recognize its importance and ensure that it has a prominent role in reading instruction ([Knowledge Matters Campaign](#)).
- States craft legislation that espouses a holistic view of reading, including its socio-affective aspects like motivation, engagement, preferences etc. (Model state: Arizona) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Require districts and public charter schools to provide students in grades K-5 with foundational literacy skills instruction as their primary method for teaching ELAs ([SCORE Tennessee Policy Pillars](#)).
- Legislators should become knowledgeable about reading science and understand common misconceptions. (Resource: American Educator) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- As lawmakers attend to reading science, they should also consider education science more broadly to guide reading policy — prioritizing evidence-based interventions, such as tutoring, and phasing out policies with mixed evidence, such as grade retention. (Model state: Michigan) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Tennessee’s legislature passed the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act* in 2021. Among its provisions was one requiring school districts and public charter schools to use a phonics-based approach for early reading instruction ([Bellwether](#)).
- Arizona provides an example of legislation that supports writing, oral language, background knowledge and motivation as important components of literacy. In SB 1572, Arizona mentions the importance of “sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension and the development and maintenance of a motivation to read.” The legislation stipulates that adopted curricula and teacher training must incorporate all these essential components. The law also requires that screening and reading assessments measure progress toward the six components. Additionally, SB 1572 also mentions using a specific assessment tool to measure a student’s motivation to read in kindergarten through 3rd grade ([Bellwether](#)).
- Kentucky provides an example of state legislation that supports writing instruction as a component of literacy In SB 129, Kentucky defines writing as “the purposeful act of thinking and expression that uses language to explore ideas and communicate meaning to others.” It recognizes that writing is a complex, multifaceted act of communication that has an important role in educational improvement. The law requires an on-demand assessment to be administered annually to elementary, middle and high school students. Students are required to take a yearly assessment on the mechanics of writing, using multiple-choice and constructed response questions at each grade level. The Kentucky Department of Education will provide guidelines to all schools for including an effective writing program within the curriculum. Within each school, “a committee appointed by the principal shall adopt policies that determine the writing program for its school and submit it to the Department of Education for review and comment.” It should include a variety of language resources; technological tools; and multiple opportunities for students to develop complex communication skills for a variety of purposes ([Shanker Institute](#)).



### 3

## Are young learners meeting reading benchmarks for third grade?

### Why it matters



Research consistently shows that reaching reading proficiency by third grade is a critical milestone for long-term academic success. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's report "Double Jeopardy" (2011) found that students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. This is because third grade marks the transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," where students begin using reading skills to comprehend

more complex subjects like science, history and math. Additionally, research by the National Research Council (1998) highlights that early reading difficulties can have long-term effects on academic achievement, self-confidence and career opportunities. Ensuring that students reach reading proficiency by third grade is essential for closing achievement gaps and promoting educational equity, particularly for students from marginalized communities.

#### Early grades on track

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students in grade 3 who meet grade-level standards in reading / English Language Arts and math as measured by state standardized tests ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).
- Percentage of third graders scoring proficient or higher on the state (and/or district) reading assessment. If third-grade scores are unavailable, we suggest using scores from fourth and then fifth grades ([StriveTogether](#)).
- Percentage of third graders scoring proficient or higher on the state (and/or district) reading assessment, disaggregated by each major racial and ethnic group, gender, economically disadvantaged status, disability status, English learner status, homeless enrolled status, and foster care status. ([StriveTogether](#)).
- Percent of students at the beginning of fourth grade who scored proficient or above as measured and defined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test. (Data source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics.) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

# Leadership for Literacy

Local Education Agencies need leaders with a clear vision for advancing early literacy in their districts and a strategy for implementing effective instructional practices across all schools.



4

**Does the LEA have a clear vision and strategy for advancing early literacy aligned to the Science of Reading?**

## Why it matters



Advancing early reading skills across a community requires a systemic, evidence-based approach grounded in the five pillars of reading — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension ([National Reading Panel, 2000](#)). To effectively support all learners, this approach must integrate key levers for reading success, including high-quality curricular materials aligned with the Science of Reading, comprehensive assessments that measure foundational literacy skills, and strategic use of data to identify student needs and inform targeted interventions ([Foorman et al., 2016](#)). Additionally, specialized literacy

teams of educators play a crucial role in providing differentiated support and professional learning for teachers ([Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008](#)). Finally, maximizing instructional time through structured literacy blocks, intervention periods, high-impact tutoring and extended learning opportunities ensures students receive adequate practice and support to achieve reading proficiency. A well-coordinated, systemic vision that aligns these elements is essential for fostering literacy development and closing achievement gaps, particularly for historically underserved students.

# Vision and Strategy

## Indicators

### Systems Indicators

- The school/system has a written vision for early literacy that reflects a mindset that every student, especially those in priority groups (e.g., students of color, students in poverty, multilingual learners, students with disabilities) can read proficiently by the end of 2nd grade ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The school/system has a written vision for early literacy that includes a focus on leveraging and building students' linguistic and cultural assets (e.g., primary languages, language dialects, language varieties) ([Instruction Partners](#)).

## Practices and policies

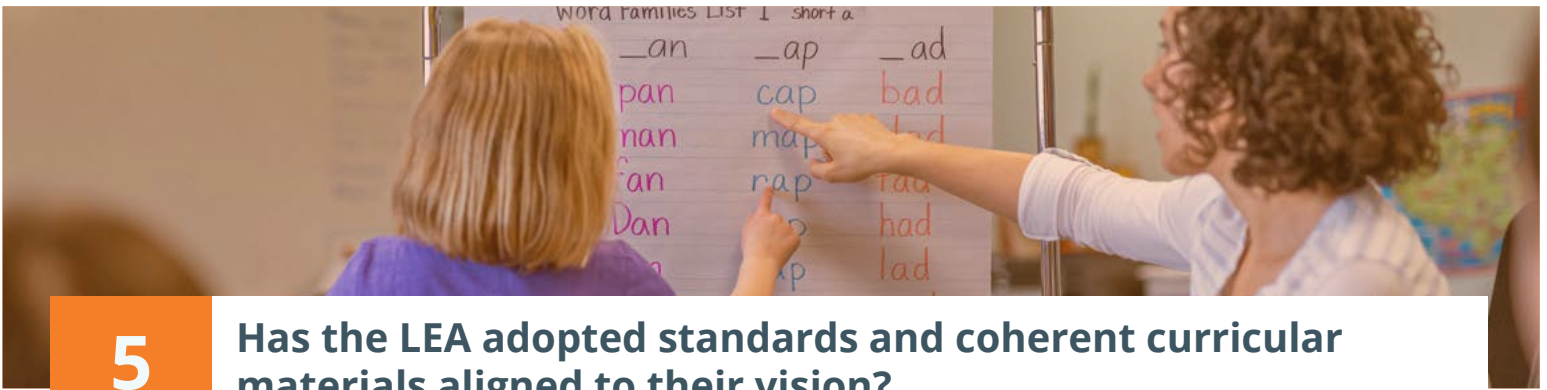
### Practices

- The school/system establishes a vision for early literacy instruction that is anchored in both the Science of Reading and the belief that all students can and will read independently and proficiently by the end of 2nd grade ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- All stakeholders have a clear understanding of the vision for early literacy, including their individual role in working toward that vision, which is consistently reflected in team communication, collaboration, and instructional decision making ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Leadership questions: What is the picture of literacy achievement in your district, school, classroom, or community? Which students are learning to read proficiently by third grade? What instructional decisions are leading to their success? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: How does the Science of Reading research play out in your district literacy strategy? Professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders? Classroom practice? Materials selection? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: What does your instructional leadership team understand about the Science of Reading? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: What opportunities exist for teachers and leaders to participate in professional learning on the Science of Reading? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: Are terms like whole language, balanced literacy, guided reading, or readers' and writers' workshop used to describe literacy instruction in your schools? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: Are there whole language-based practices happening in your schools? What are they? What is the rationale for keeping them? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- Leadership questions: How are instructional materials for literacy selected in your district? Are your district's literacy materials rooted in the Science of Reading? If you approach the selection of ELA instructional materials with a focus on the Science of Reading, what strategies, approaches, and practices will need to change? ([SCORE Tennessee](#))
- It is hard to overstate the importance of school leadership in educational improvement. Research suggests that administrators play an important role as instructional leaders, setting high expectations for student achievement ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Effective principals orient their practice toward instructionally focused interactions with teachers, building a productive school climate, facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities, and strategic personnel and resource management processes ([J. A. Grissom](#) as quoted in [Shanker Institute](#)).
- Effective school leadership plays a vital role in improving students' reading skills. A competent leader should possess several key qualities, such as the ability to articulate a clear vision for reading instruction based on research-based best practices; to prioritize skill development; to monitor students' progress; and to continuously seek ways to improve teaching practices ([Shanker Institute](#)).



## Policies

- Building a strong foundation for reading improvement requires a comprehensive array of supports for both teachers and students. State legislation should guarantee that their laws address all these aspects, building a solid foundation for literacy improvement. Lawmakers should prioritize establishing system alignment and coherence, which is arguably the most vital objective moving forward ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Without the support and commitment of school leaders, teachers might struggle to implement reforms. Therefore, legislators should consider policies that educate and empower school administrators with knowledge of the Science of Reading. Such enlightened leadership is crucial for ensuring that teachers' varied professional needs are met and that professional learning demands are sustainable, appropriately compensated, and come with ample opportunities for practical application. (Model state: Utah) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Utah's reading instruction legislation provides an example of capacity-building leadership promoting the Science of Reading. In Utah, the administrative team takes on an important role in promoting educational improvement and the Science of Reading. Specifically, the law states that leaders should "develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems" for teachers' professional learning. The law requires all principals, supervisors, local educational district leaders and literacy specialists to complete professional learning on the Science of Reading within a specified time period. School leaders and literacy coaches are then required to work in partnership to ensure that all teachers have a team of support for improving literacy instruction ([Shanker Institute](#)).



5

**Has the LEA adopted standards and coherent curricular materials aligned to their vision?**

## Why it matters



Having standards-aligned, coherent instructional materials in the early grades is critical for literacy development because it ensures that all students receive systematic, evidence-based instruction that builds foundational reading skills. As referenced above, the National Reading Panel (2000) emphasizes the importance of structured literacy instruction, particularly in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. High-quality, coherent materials help educators deliver instruction in a logical sequence, preventing gaps in learning and ensuring alignment with grade-level expectations ([Steiner, 2017](#)).

Moreover, studies show that when instructional materials are aligned with research-based literacy practices, students make greater reading gains, particularly those from historically marginalized communities ([Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012](#)). Coherent curricula also support teacher effectiveness by reducing the need for teachers to piece together disparate resources, allowing them to focus on instruction rather than material selection ([Kane, Owens, Marinell, Thal, & Staiger, 2016](#)). Implementing high-quality, standards-aligned literacy curricula in early grades is essential for equitable literacy outcomes and long-term academic success.

# Curricular materials

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percent of students receiving instruction from a standards-aligned, research-based early literacy curriculum ([Instruction Partners](#)).

## Systems indicators

- The local education agency has adopted Tier 1 curricular materials that are anchored in the Science of Reading and include a systematic and explicit foundational skills program as well as content-rich reading materials that support knowledge building ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Availability of social-emotional learning curricula and programs (such as growth mindset interventions) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating access to sufficient curriculum resources ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating alignment among standards, curriculum, resources and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- Quality and extent of use of culturally-responsive curriculum (Data sources: Local policy and practice assessment, inventory or review) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Schools implement an anti-racist curriculum ([National Education Association](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- When and if appropriate, additional culturally and/or linguistically relevant materials are used alongside curricular materials to support students in making personal connections

([Instruction Partners](#)).

- Tiered intervention programs in use are structured and systematic; they amplify and accelerate learning from Tier 1 materials ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Curriculum-embedded assessments and materials are used seamlessly to design whole- and small-group learning experiences that move every student toward reading proficiency ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- LEAs reference EdReports when assessing the quality of potential early literacy curricula ([edreports](#)).
- Schools implement the Welcoming Schools program founded by the Human Rights Campaign ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools include educators in curriculum selection ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools use the community as a contextualized learning environment ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools include educators in implementation plan development for standards and curriculum ([National Education Association](#)).

### Policies

- Studies suggest that a high-quality, culturally relevant and knowledge-rich curriculum can be an important lever for reading reform. High-quality curricula provide a scope and sequence of content and skills, with opportunities for review, and pedagogical practices and activities for students who need additional support. At their most effective, they use asset-based pedagogies that incorporate students' cultural identities and lived experiences into the classroom as tools for learning and critical thinking ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Converging evidence across the fields of special education, literacy education and English



language learning has shown that high-quality, culturally relevant and knowledge-rich curricula can improve student outcomes. Recognizing its importance, Chiefs for Change, an organization of state and district leaders representing over 7 million students, has made the adoption of evidence-based curricula a centerpiece of its ongoing efforts ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- Like many other states, Delaware identifies the five pillars of reading as the essential components of an evidenced-based curriculum. Districts are asked to select from an approved list or can apply to use an alternative curriculum that is evidenced-based. All curricula on this approved list should include a “logical scope and sequence that is sequential, systematic, and cumulative.” At the same time, the law recognizes that one core reading program may not contain all of these elements and may need to be combined with other resources. Therefore, the core program and the supplementary sources need to be well-aligned to ensure that students receive an evidence-based curriculum ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- According to Education Week, [40 states and the District of Columbia](#) have passed laws or implemented new policies related to evidence-based reading instruction since 2013 ([Education Week](#)).
- Mississippi’s Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA) focuses on the prevention of reading difficulties through screenings, early identification, and interventions. Mississippi moved from 49th to 21st in the nation for 4th grade reading ([ExcelinEd](#)).
- In 2022, Alaska passed the [Alaska Reads Act](#), requiring statewide teacher training in evidence-based reading practices, providing classroom reading specialists, and implementing early screening for K-3 reading difficulties. Parents also receive tools to support reading at home ([ExcelinEd](#)).
- Virginia’s unanimously passed [Early Literacy Act](#) mandates science-of-reading training for teachers, early identification of struggling readers, and school board literacy plans with intervention services ([Virginia Literacy Partners](#)).
- State develops a policy that requires alignment between curricular content and rigorous standards and is inclusive of every ability, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and gender identity ([National Education Association](#)).
- State policy mandates alignment among content standards, curriculum, resources and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- State policy requires educator involvement in developing content standards and curriculum guidelines ([National Education Association](#)).
- State has an autonomous curriculum review board with a majority of active pre-K through 12 educators ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding to ensure curricular content is inclusive of students of every ability, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and gender identity ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides high-quality resources that are aligned with standards and curriculum. Resources may include textbooks, workbooks, technology and supplies ([National Education Association](#)).
- Tennessee’s policy on High-Quality Instructional Materials: Districts and public charter schools must adopt and purchase textbooks and instructional materials designed to align with the five foundational literacy skills. To support adoption and use of these aligned materials, the state invested in networks of districts to support the implementation of these newly purchased materials and to provide coaches for educator training. ([SCORE Tennessee Policy Pillars](#))



## 6

### Does the LEA use quality data and assessment resources consistently, coherently and strategically to drive instructional decision making for all students?

## Why it matters



Consistent, coherent and strategic use of assessments and data is essential for advancing third grade reading outcomes, as it allows educators to identify student needs early and provide targeted support. Research emphasizes that a comprehensive assessment system — including diagnostic assessments, universal screeners, progress monitoring and formative assessments — is critical for improving literacy achievement ([Foorman et al., 2016](#)).

When used strategically and systematically, these assessments enable data-driven instruction that accelerates reading progress, particularly for students who need additional support. Schools that effectively implement assessment systems aligned with the Science of Reading see improved literacy outcomes and reduced achievement gaps.

## Data-driven instruction

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Each student has clear, individual learning goals and learning targets that teachers, students, and families/caregivers understand ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Student data is gathered from multiple forms of assessment (e.g., universal screener, progress monitoring, curriculum assessment, teachers' observation notes about skills individual students have and have not yet mastered) ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Students at-risk for reading difficulties are identified early and provided targeted intervention.

- Families and caregivers are kept up-to-date on their child's progress toward goals and play an active role in supporting their child's journey to becoming a skilled reader ([Instruction Partners](#)).

#### Systems Indicators

- The assessment system in place includes a universal screener that assesses all students' proficiency on nationally-normed, grade-level benchmarks at least three times per year ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The assessment system in place includes progress monitoring tools to determine how students are progressing toward their individual goals and student growth targets

based on nationally-normed benchmarks ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- The assessment system in place includes a diagnostic assessment that pinpoints the specific skills that students have mastered and/or where they need further instruction and practice ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The assessment system in place includes formative assessments (e.g., from the curriculum, anecdotal records) to assess students' mastery of what is being taught. Note that it is important to consider that additional or alternative assessment data may be necessary to yield a holistic picture of students' knowledge and skills, particularly for students in priority groups (e.g., a test given in English may not capture the language skills of a Spanish-speaking student; providing them an assessment in Spanish may offer educators a more accurate picture of their skills and knowledge) ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Assessment and evaluation honor multilingual learners' (MLs') primary languages and current English proficiency levels. There is a written policy to ensure that MLs are not held back in the curriculum sequence or small-group work based on primary language influence or current English proficiency level ([Instruction Partners](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- There is a clear and efficient data cycle process in place that supports leaders and teachers in collecting and analyzing student data as well as adjusting instruction based on what is and is not working ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- When analyzing student data, all educators providing or supporting early literacy instruction are included (e.g., K-2 and language development teachers) ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Data is analyzed collaboratively from each form of assessment alongside student goals to determine what is working and what may need

to be refined to support students in moving toward skill mastery ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- Data analysis adjusts tier placement for students based on clear entry and exit criteria for intervention with an emphasis on exiting students as flexibly and quickly as possible ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Student data is disaggregated and analyzed by demographics; team members use this data to ensure that the needs of students in priority groups are centered when making instructional decisions ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Schools develop the infrastructure, knowledge, incentives, and accountability structures needed to collect and analyze data, making it possible to track children's progress toward results from birth through third grade, individualize teaching strategies, and intervene when needed ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

### Policies

- State legislation should describe a comprehensive set of in-school supports for students. These supports should include screenings to identify students at risk of reading failure, progress-monitoring instruments and diagnostic assessments to identify special needs. Assessment data should guide instruction, the selection of intervention strategies and referrals for special services ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Require schools administer Kindergarten entry assessments to guide instruction ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

# Teaching and Learning

Schools with well-trained, specialized early literacy teams with representative teachers can effectively facilitate a flexible, equitable and culturally relevant literacy program.



7

**Does each school have a well-trained, specialized early literacy team to facilitate a flexible, equitable literacy program?**

## Why it matters



Specialized literacy teams help build teacher capacity through professional learning and coaching, ensuring consistent and effective instruction across classrooms ([Neuman & Cunningham, 2009](#)). They also lead data-driven interventions, using assessments to identify struggling readers early and tailor support to their

specific needs ([Foorman et al., 2016](#)). Schools that implement structured, multi-tiered literacy support — such as Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) — with trained literacy specialists see stronger reading gains, particularly for students at risk of falling behind ([Gersten et al., 2008](#)).



# Teacher training, learning and development

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percent of students who have access to early literacy teachers who have the content knowledge and instructional skill set necessary to use data to move every student, especially those in priority groups, to reading proficiency ([Instruction Partners](#)).

### Systems Indicators

- The percent of teachers who have been trained in the Science of Reading.
- [The percentage of teachers who have access to] teacher coaching and professional development ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of kindergarten teachers that have passed a pre-service performance assessment prior to obtaining their initial license ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of lead pre-K teachers with at least a bachelor's degree ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).  
Percentage of lead teachers with specialized training in pre-K ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating alignment among professional learning, standards, curriculum and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with professional learning time and opportunities ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators who participated in job-embedded professional learning opportunities in the previous year ([National Education Association](#)).

- Percentage of workforce members who receive training in culturally-responsive instruction, especially to understand a child's developmental progress to inform instruction ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- A study of California public school performance in mathematics and English language arts found that aside from socioeconomic status of students, a major predictor of student achievement is the preparedness of teachers. Underprepared teachers — those teaching on emergency permits, waivers, and intern credentials — are associated with decreased achievement for all students, especially for students of color ([Learning Policy Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- The school builds a well-trained and specialized early literacy team to facilitate a flexible and equitable early literacy program that systematically moves students towards reading proficiency ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Each school has an early literacy team, composed of (but not limited to) school and system leaders, coaches, teachers, interventionists, and coordinators of special populations (e.g., Multilingual Learners). A subset of members serve as the early literacy leadership team, which is responsible for ensuring that early literacy initiatives are implemented effectively and continuously improving. All team members understand their roles and responsibilities ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Early literacy team members and all early literacy educators have the content knowledge and instructional skill set necessary to use data to move every student, especially those



in priority groups, toward reading proficiency ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- All early literacy team members and educators consistently engage in ongoing professional learning, including training and coaching in the Science of Reading, best practices for supporting specialized populations (e.g., MLs), the specific curricular resources in use, and relevant classroom observation tools (e.g., the [Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool](#)). ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Early literacy team members strategically and collaboratively support Tier 1 whole- and small-group instruction as well as interventions to ensure that students meet their goals ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Early literacy team members evaluate the implementation of early literacy strategies through analysis of a variety of data sources (e.g., student assessment, staff surveys) and classroom walkthroughs using an observation tool (e.g., the [Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool](#)). ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The early literacy leadership team plans for and provides targeted support based on data collected ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Adopt training and professional development strategies that ensure the teacher workforce is culturally and linguistically diverse and responsive to the needs of children and families being served ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Establish research-based teacher competencies that address child development; protective factors; social, emotional, and behavior management; and cultural and linguistic appropriateness ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Support training and coaching for teachers working with special populations including dual language learners and children with disabilities ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Establish a coordinated professional development system to reflect the principles and indicators of [NAEYC's Blueprint for State](#)

### [Early Childhood Professional Development Systems](#) ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Educational institutions develop an aligned professional development system, and sufficient compensation, to ensure a well-trained, competent, and qualified workforce in birth-to-5 services and child care in the pre-K to third grade. This system would include infant health specialists, early childhood development specialists, preschool and K-3 teachers, principals, health and mental health professionals, school social workers, nurse home visitors, and child trauma psychotherapists ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Teacher preparation programs train teacher candidates on the Science of Reading ([NCTQ](#)).
- Districts partner with teacher preparation programs on teacher residencies and induction ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of preparation program graduates surveyed indicating satisfaction with their preparedness to serve as the teacher-of-record ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs survey graduates about their preparedness to serve as the teacher-of-record and report their response rates ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs use pre-service performance assessments to determine candidate preparedness prior to program completion and/or initial licensure ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts align professional learning with standards, curriculum and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts have professional learning plans, including induction and mentoring, for teachers, education support professionals (ESPs) and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts integrate theories, research and

models of human learning into the planning and design of professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts provide educators with targeted support based on formative and summative evaluation results ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide extra resources and assistance for those educators in hard-to-staff schools ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide funding for educators to access professional learning that addresses new education research and technology that will help improve instruction or support for students ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide ongoing professional learning and support to administrators, including training in equity and racial and social justice to better support Indigenous educators and students as well as educators and students of color ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide teacher leadership development ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts support regular, job-embedded professional learning opportunities ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use a variety of student, educator and systems data to plan, assess and evaluate professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- Research suggests that coherent and sustained teacher preparation and professional development, which involve active learning through coaching and modeling support, are more effective in enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills ([Shanker Institute](#)).

## Policies

- Legislation in approximately 45 states requires training for educators in evidence-based reading instruction and/or implementation of an instructional coaching program.

- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act adopted the professional-learning program [LETRS](#) (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) which was used to train teachers in new teaching methods ([Bellwether](#)).
- Tennessee's *Tennessee Literacy Success Act* (2021) requires specific literacy training be provided to teachers ([Bellwether](#)).
- Georgia's *Georgia Early Literacy Act* (2023) has the state's Department of Education to develop or purchase literacy training for K-3 teachers and requires teachers to complete the training ([Bellwether](#)).
- Effectively supporting teachers involves more than directly investing in their development. Teachers need instructional materials that support their practice as well as school leaders capable of creating the conditions for change. When all these components work together, they lay a robust foundation for improvement ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Allowing flexibility in implementation, but pairing it with support — e.g., professional development or curriculum lists — so that districts can more efficiently select high-quality programs and instructional materials ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Supporting existing teachers by offering professional development opportunities that are grounded in reading science ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Professional development in Texas addresses the important issue of vertical alignment in reading. The commissioner is charged with developing and making available literacy academies for teachers with appropriate professional development for each grade band. The academies are also required to create a specialized screening and training program for students who may have dyslexia ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- For Texas teachers in grades K–3 professional development must include training in

systematic instructional practices in the five pillars of reading, and the use of empirically validated instructional methods for struggling readers. In addition to those skills, the academies for teachers in grades 4–5 must provide training in comprehension, inferential and critical thinking. For teachers in grades 6–8, the academies must include strategies for multisyllabic word reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension of expository and narrative text. In addition, teachers must be trained in an adaptation framework that enables them to respond to differing student strengths and needs, and degrees of English proficiency for students receiving special education services. The academies will also focus on helping teachers develop collaborative strategies to active student involvement and motivation to read ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- All Texas teachers in grades K - 8 who provide instruction in content areas such as mathematics, science, or social studies must receive training in strategies for incorporating reading instruction into the curriculum for their subject area ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Among the most important features of professional development may be its content focus and the degree to which it is tied to the student curriculum content that teachers are expected to teach. Previous research indicates that professional development focused on strategies associated with curriculum content can promote teacher learning within the classroom. For example, Mississippi's noted gains in the 2019 NAEP report were supported by providing statewide professional development modules on the Science of Reading tied to evidence-based curricular materials with coaching support to ensure high fidelity in classroom practices ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Recent research has shown that coaching is a promising model to support teachers' professional learning, although scaling up

implementation in large school districts remains challenging ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- Like many other states, Delaware identifies the five pillars of reading as the essential components of an evidenced-based curriculum. The law requires districts to align their assessments and progress-monitoring tools to support instruction and to identify students who need additional support. To ensure that teachers are well-prepared to take on these responsibilities, it requires districts to provide professional development aligned with the adopted curriculum and creates a supervisory role for an individual to assist in its implementation ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Districts mandate successful completion of a residency program prior to obtaining initial licensure ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs require school-based experiences beyond a semester of student teaching ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for induction programs ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for preparation programs to establish residency programs with local school districts ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides resources to grow preparation programs in minority-serving institutions ([National Education Association](#)).
- Investing in hiring, training and retaining a high-quality and diverse workforce of educators ([Urban Institute](#)).
- State provides funding and technical assistance to strengthen professional learning in areas with high concentrations of poverty, Indigenous students and students of color, with emphasis on mentoring, implicit bias and cultural competency ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for job-embedded professional learning opportunities to help educators improve their instructional repertoire

([National Education Association](#)).

- Tennessee’s Teacher Preparation and Training: To support foundational literacy skills instruction, the state developed standards for training K-5 teachers to effectively teach reading. All K-5 educators have access to training that focuses on the five foundational literacy skills, either through their formal

preparation as a teacher candidate or through a free course provided by the state. All K-5 teacher candidates and current K-5 teachers must demonstrate their understanding of the foundational literacy skills approach and the use of newly adopted high-quality instructional materials ([SCORE Tennessee Policy Pillars](#)).



8

## Does the school maximize and direct time to continuously improve the effectiveness of instruction and intervention?

### Why it matters



Maximizing and strategically directing instructional time is essential for improving early literacy outcomes, as research shows that both the quantity and quality of instruction significantly impact reading achievement ([Torgesen, 2004](#)). Effective use of time involves dedicated literacy blocks, targeted small-group instruction and

extended learning opportunities such as tutoring and intervention periods ([Connor et al., 2009](#)). Schools should allocate at least 120 minutes per day for Tier 1 (core) literacy instruction that includes foundational skills, language comprehension and differentiated small group instruction ([Instruction Partners](#)).

### Effective use of instructional time, collaborative planning time and instructional support

#### Indicators

##### Contributing indicators

- Percent of students who receive at least 120 minutes a day of literacy instruction ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Percent of students who have access to extended learning opportunities in reading ([Instruction Partners](#)).

##### Systems Indicators

- Percent of schools who dedicate at least 120 minutes a day to literacy instruction ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Percent of schools who use targeted small group instruction as part of their literacy block ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Percent of schools who offer extended learning



opportunities in reading ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with collaborative planning time ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with guidance and support for instruction ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with instructional time ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with the time dedicated to planning ([National Education Association](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Tier 1 instruction includes targeted small group time for all students to get specific support and practice ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction utilizes evidence-based interventions aligned with the core curriculum, addressing specific student needs through targeted, data-driven support. Flexible grouping ensures students receive appropriate instruction and move between tiers based on ongoing progress monitoring and demonstrated mastery. ([Reading Rockets](#))
- The school maximizes and directs all available time to continuously improve the effectiveness of instruction and intervention (Tier 2 and 3 instruction), including ongoing adult professional learning ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Members of the early literacy leadership team have protected time to conduct regular, collaborative whole- and small-group classroom walkthroughs, meet and analyze data, and reflect on intervention (Tier 2 and 3) program effectiveness. The amount of time a school or system decides to protect will depend on local context (e.g., number of classrooms they need to observe) ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- Members of the early literacy team have protected time to engage in weekly, ongoing professional learning ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Members of the early literacy team have protected time to engage in the data cycle process ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Teacher uses structured curriculum and instructional materials that encompass literacy along with other subjects, including a consistent scope and sequence for building decoding skills and word recognition alongside knowledge, comprehension, writing, speaking, and other dimensions of literacy. Science of Reading makes extensive use of formative and benchmark assessments to track student progress and inform instructional differentiation ([Bellwether](#)).
- Districts implement scheduled job-embedded planning, instructional support and collaborative time ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide resources to guarantee dedicated time for teacher teams to plan and review student data to improve instructional results ([National Education Association](#)).

### Policies

- State policy supports regular job-embedded planning, instructional support and collaboration ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides resources for planning, instructional support and collaboration. Instructional support and collaboration may include professional learning communities, professional learning teams, lesson study, cohort learning, mentoring and induction) ([National Education Association](#)).
- State requires districts to obtain educator input on instructional minutes ([National Education Association](#)).





## 9

## Are teachers and schools making significant contributions to academic growth for students?

### Why it matters



Schools' contribution to student outcomes: School effectiveness measures aim to capture schools' impacts on student achievement on test scores, as well as more long-term outcomes, such as high school graduation, college access and success, and eventual earnings ([Education-to-Workforce](#)). In most local education agencies and states, schools' first view of their impact on each student happens with third grade standardized tests. Analyses of nationwide data by the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University showed that, although test scores are higher, on average, in more affluent school districts, the relationship between school affluence and student outcomes does not hold when examining student learning growth ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).

Teachers' contribution to student learning: Research has proven that teachers are one of the most important contributors to student learning and social-emotional development ([RAND 2019](#)). Measuring their contributions to student learning relies on measuring their students' growth on learning outcomes (sometimes called "value-added"). Value-added models measure contributions to student outcomes by considering students' initial performance levels (for example, using prior test scores) or other background characteristics. Value-added measures (VAM) in early grades like K-2, where standardized testing is not typically administered, rely on alternative methods to estimate student growth. One common

approach uses early literacy assessments, such as DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) or NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), which provide baseline and progress data aligned with literacy standards. Another method involves calculating teacher contribution scores based on cohort growth, comparing the progress of a teacher's students to that of similar students within the district or state, accounting for factors like prior achievement and demographics. Additionally, classroom observations, student work portfolios and other qualitative proxies are often incorporated to provide a more comprehensive view of teacher impact in the absence of standardized tests. These methods are widely discussed in research on early childhood education and teacher evaluation systems (e.g., [McCaffrey et al., 2004](#); [Kane & Staiger, 2012](#)).

Multilingual learner progress: True fluency in multiple languages is an incredible asset to individuals, their families and global society. Multilingual learners (MLs), also known as English Learners (ELs) or English Language Learners (ELLs), represent a rapidly growing population in U.S. public schools, accounting for over 10% of all students nationwide. These students have the opportunity to continue developing proficiency in their home language while acquiring English as a second — or sometimes third or fourth — language. However, this process is complex and demanding, particularly in systems that often

face challenges such as a shortage of multilingual teachers, inconsistent implementation of bilingual or dual-language programs, and the pressures of high-stakes accountability testing. Research shows significant disparities in outcomes between ML students and their non-ML peers, with long-term English Learners — those who have not achieved English proficiency after five to seven years —

being particularly at risk. These students often have a GPA below 2.0 and perform two to three years below grade level in English language arts and math. Additionally, they face higher dropout rates and lower rates of college enrollment, underscoring the critical need for targeted support and resources to help these students succeed ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).

## Multilingual learner progress

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Student enrollment by English language acquisition status. For instance, when enrolling students in a California PK-12 public school, parents or guardians complete a home language survey. This survey identifies students who speak only English at home as English only (EO). Those students identified as having a language other than English at home are assessed for their English language proficiency within the first 30 days of enrollment. Based on this assessment, students who are determined to have sufficient English language proficiency to access the curriculum without additional support are identified as Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP), while those who require additional English language development support are identified as English learners (EL). Additionally, as students move through the grades, ELs that achieve English language proficiency are identified as Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who are (or have ever been) classified as English language learners ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who are classified as Long-Term English language learners (LTELs) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who are classified as “At-Risk” Long-Term English language learners (AR-LTELs) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who had been classified as English Language Learners but are now reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of English Language Learners who make progress towards English language proficiency. The [California Schools Dashboard](#) has a measure called the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) which determines whether an English Language Learner has made adequate progress, as measured by the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percentage of students who meet or exceed English Language Arts standards, disaggregated by English-Only students (EO), English Learners (EL), Initially Fluent-English Proficient (IFEP), and Reclassified Fluent-English Proficient (RFEP) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Gap in English Language Arts performance between English-Only students and multilingual students.
- Percent of multilingual learners who meet or exceed standards in English Language Arts ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who participate in a Dual Language Immersion or Developmental Bilingual Programs ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of students who participate in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages ([Californians Together](#)).

- Percent of multilingual learners who are chronically absent ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who have a breakfast meal before school. (Tracked through student response surveys like the California Healthy Kids Survey) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who have access to expanded learning opportunities ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who have a caring adult relationship at school. (Tracked through student response surveys like the California Healthy Kids Survey) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of multilingual learners who experience chronic sadness or hopelessness in school (tracked through student response surveys like the California Healthy Kids Survey) ([Californians Together](#)).

### Systems Indicators

- Number of bilingual teacher preparation programs at state-approved education preparation programs ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of bilingual preparation programs offering the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential who offer a bilingual authorization ([Californians Together](#)).
- Percent of teachers who have access to a supportive school environment and high-quality professional learning that includes designated and integrated English Language Development strategies ([Californians Together](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Spanish-speaking children enter kindergarten with many social strengths that are the result of positive parenting practices that need to be acknowledged and enhanced ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

### Maintaining home language

- Supporting multilingual students to maintain

their home language while building English proficiency is an effective strategy that yields positive outcomes on many indicators and also ensures an asset-based approach to language acquisition ([Californians Together](#)).

- Bilingualism is framed as an asset. All young children are capable of learning two languages. Becoming bilingual has long-term cognitive, academic, social, cultural, and economic benefits ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Young multilingual learners require systematic support for the continued development for their home language ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Loss of the home language has potential negative long-term consequences for the multilingual child's academic, social, and emotional development, as well as for the family dynamics ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Teachers and programs can adopt effective strategies to support home language development even when the teachers are monolingual English speakers ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Research shows that bilingualism and biliteracy are assets in many aspects of learning and cognitive development. And strong language and literacy skills in a child's home language can facilitate the development of those same skills in English. For example, in one recent study, students formerly classified as ELs who achieved English language proficiency by the eighth grade did as well as their peers on reading tests, and better in terms of math, attendance, and class grades ([Bellwether](#)).
- Pre-schools and schools are responsive to different EL strengths, needs and identities, and support the socio-emotional health and development of English learners. Programs value and build upon the cultural and linguistic assets students bring to their education in safe and affirming school climates. Educators value and build strong family, community, and school partnerships ([California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy](#)).
- Educators talk with families about their language and learning goals for their child. Ask

families to share their thoughts on the child's bilingual development and how this may relate to their goals ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

- Educators provide opportunities for multilingual children who speak the same home language to serve as peer support for each other ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking in both languages to develop bilingualism and biliteracy ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators make sure to use content to build both the home language and English, so that ML children develop content understanding in both languages ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide explicit opportunities for children to compare and contrast the two languages to support cross-language transfer of learning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers invite children to be experts and share their home language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers invite parents and other speakers of the home language to join classroom activities to speak, tell, and share stories, and to read in the home language (for example, invite parents to read a story in the home language before reading the same story in English) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

### **Instruction**

- Extra support for English language learners to help them master the language and content, including extra time for individualized instruction and materials that are relevant ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- School and system schedules provide the appropriate amount of time for language instruction educational program (LIEP) services such as bilingual education or English language development (ELD) programs and services ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Dual-language programs are an effective approach to improving academic achievement for multilingual children, while providing bene-

fits to native English speakers ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

- Research suggests that many of the same Science of Reading instructional principles regarding the knowledge and skills that enable monolingual children to learn to read in English also serve multilingual children well. Multilingual children also need tailored instruction and attention to continue developing in areas such as oral language skills, home language and literacy development, and culturally/linguistically responsive texts, materials, and assessments ([Bellwether](#)).
- A growing body of evidence suggests that the combination of strong foundational skills, complex texts, and integrated knowledge building captured by Science of Reading could accelerate achievement among student groups that have not been well served by other modes of instruction. However, because this is not a single approach or curriculum, specific results are difficult to quantify ([Bellwether](#)).
- Providing extensive and varied vocabulary instruction including in academic vocabulary. Evidence finds that explicit vocabulary instruction supports English language learners' development of reading comprehension once they have mastered the foundational literacy skills. Aspiring teachers should learn to provide vocabulary instruction that includes "multiple exposures to target words over several days and across reading, writing, and speaking opportunities" with "student-friendly" definitions of words ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Providing intensive small-group reading interventions that include English language development. This instruction should focus on the core components of reading and rely on explicit, direct instruction. This small-group instruction should include opportunities for students to engage in discussions using the words in the texts they are reading, respond to and pose questions, learn the meanings of words and become familiar with the phonemes within the words being used, practice reading words and sentences, and receive clear feedback from teachers to correct errors ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).



- Scheduling regular peer-assisted learning opportunities. English language learners of varying language proficiency should work together several times a week on structured academic tasks ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Help multilingual children join fully in group learning settings by providing opportunities to have a role in small and large groups ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Instruction that capitalizes on students' home language, knowledge and cultural assets could include providing a preview of content in a child's home language, reading stories in the child's home language, offering definitions of vocabulary in the home language, helping children learn cognates for English words (for example, asking Spanish-speaking students to identify cognates like "mysterioso" and "mysterious"), and connecting key concepts with children's prior knowledge ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Providing visual and verbal supports to help students understand core content. These could include instructional videos, visuals, and graphic organizers. English learners benefit more than their English-proficient peers from the teacher providing students with information rather than engaging them in the creation of information ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Schools increase access to rigorous coursework for multilingual learners and ensure supports are in place (such as access to high quality instructional materials that center multilingual learner needs) ([Californians Together](#)).
- Dual language and bilingual education models use both the home language and English as the languages of instruction and have the explicit goal of developing bilingualism. Bilingual models vary in how much time is allocated to each language, but the use of the home language for instruction across these models shows a valuing of and commitment to home language development. Research suggests that dual language education has positive effects on children's home language and English language skills, as well as other learning domains. It takes a great level of commitment for a program to adopt a dual language model, including administrator/program commitment, qualified bilingual staff, intensive training, materials, and resources ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide opportunities for multilingual children to build friendships and relationships and to meaningfully participate in peer social interactions ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide adequate time for informal learning and exploration to help develop relationships within the classroom ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- In the classroom, educators include labels and other functional print in the home language. Make sure home language print is on an equal footing with English print (for example, make labels the same size in both languages) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- In the classroom, educators provide books and materials in the home language that depict the cultural and linguistic background of children in a positive light. Make sure children of each language and cultural background can see themselves represented in the classroom ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- In the classroom, educators display and provide culturally relevant materials, including family pictures and cultural items from children's homes. Include families in helping to select books, objects, and materials to display in the classrooms ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide language-rich environments to support each language by providing high-quality, responsive, and extended talk in each language, including longer utterances with varied vocabulary, a mix of open-ended and scaffolding questions, providing child-friendly definitions for new or unfamiliar words, recasting or repeating an erroneous utterance in a corrected form, and engaging in back-and-forth exchanges ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide language-rich environments to support each language by asking questions in each language, including a mix of open- and closed-ended questions, to elicit talk from



children ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

- Educators provide language-rich environments to support each language by repeating and elaborate/expand on children's talk in each language, for example, with adjectives, adverbs, or clauses that are related to the topic the child is discussing ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide language-rich environments to support each language by incorporating songs, rhymes, and chants in each language, and connect them to content learning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide explicit vocabulary instruction in each language by selecting commonly used academic words (e.g., observe, demonstrate, cycle, evaluate, conflict) and content-specific words or phrases (e.g., energy, habitat, food chain, law, freedom) from the focus of study and incorporate them in instruction ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide explicit vocabulary instruction in each language by explicitly teaching words through multiple modalities of writing, speaking, and listening (e.g., vocabulary picture cards, word maps, visual aids, props, word walls, gestures, drawings) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide explicit vocabulary instruction in each language by providing hands-on, inquiry-based experiences (such as designing and carrying out experiments) to help give language meaning and purpose ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators build foundational reading skills in each language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators conduct phonological awareness activities that explicitly teach children to hear individual segments of sounds in words, such as using manipulatives to represent sound units (relevant for letter-based writing systems only) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators help children identify letters and develop awareness of letter-sound connections, that is, phonics (relevant for letter-based writing systems only) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide instruction on book concepts and knowledge (particularly in preschool to support emergent literacy) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators use shared reading activities to build oral language and reading comprehension skills in each language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators read text aloud with appropriate speed and expression to promote oral reading fluency ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators conduct pre- and post-reading activities and discussions in each language to foster critical thinking skills and reading comprehension ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators engage in interactive (dialogic) reading by asking open-ended questions, prompting children to retell narratives, and modeling and supporting language and content comprehension skills ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators introduce and explain new vocabulary words before, during, or after reading.
- Educators read text in the home language first, and then follow up by reading the text in English over a period of time ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide consistent opportunities and appropriate scaffolds to engage children with writing in each language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators practice developmentally appropriate writing activities (pre-writing in preschool) in each language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide language-based supports (e.g., graphic organizers, sentence starters) to help children begin and develop writing ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide writing assignments that are content-based and help develop academic language as well as writing skills (elementary only) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators develop student writing for a variety of genres and audiences, using appropriate content, organization, and style (elementary only) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

- Teachers introduce key vocabulary words in the home language that are related to the content being taught, prior to teaching in English ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers use cognates (e.g., art/arte, computer/computadora in Spanish) to emphasize connections between English and the home language (if applicable to the home language) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers use visual cues, gestures, and signals to accompany speech ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers use instructional tools (e.g., videos, graphic organizers) to develop language in context ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers teach word learning strategies (e.g., use of context clues, word parts, cognates) to help children learn the meaning of English words ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers conduct supplemental small group instruction, in the home language and/or English, with multilingual children of similar proficiency levels to help support content learning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers preview concepts in the home language to activate and build background knowledge, prior to teaching new content in English ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers permit multilingual children longer wait times to allow them to process speech ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers introduce longer phrases and sentences and offer less support as ML's English proficiency grows ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers provide children opportunities to work in pairs or small groups with English proficient peers who can serve as language models ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers provide hands-on, inquiry-based experiences to help give content and subject matter meaning and purpose ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers preview and review learning material (e.g., books, vocabulary) in the home language before teaching it in English, to activate and connect to background knowledge children have about the topic from their home language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers provide targeted small group instruction for ML children to facilitate learning of new content and targeted support of language and literacy ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers strategically organize multilingual children in pairs or small groups with same language peers to support content learning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers provide multiple opportunities for children to engage with and practice content area vocabulary and concepts ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
  - Teachers co-create language and content learning goals for children with co-teachers and parents ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- ### **Progress Monitoring**
- Teachers need training on which assessments are best to use for English language learners, how to conduct formative assessments, and how to use data from these assessments to guide instruction for English language learners. They also must be able to distinguish between reading problems and issues related to oral language development ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
  - Schools and local organizations set goals for multilingual learner outcomes, track progress, and invest in adequate resources ([Californians Together](#)).
  - English learners engage in intellectually rich, developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster high levels of English proficiency. These experiences integrate language development, literacy, and content learning as well as provide access for comprehension and participation through native language instruction and scaffolding. English learners have meaningful access to a full standards-based and relevant curriculum and the opportunity to develop proficiency in English and other languages ([California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy](#)).

- Educators assess children in both their home language and English to understand their full range of skills ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers use assessment results to inform instruction based on student English language development progress. Use assessment to inform strategic grouping and small group instruction ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers draw from a variety of formative assessment tools (e.g., observations of child's oral language, portfolios of written work, comprehension-focused questions or tasks) to monitor progress ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers use summative assessment tools (e.g., a standardized tool that measures a specific skill) to determine if children are adequately learning content and progressing in language development ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers assess children in their home language. If you do not speak the home language, try to find interpreters to help conduct assessments ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Teachers learn about the process of second language acquisition in order to help assess and monitor multilingual children's progress in language development ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

### ***School Programs and Partnerships***

- Schools expand opportunities for students to participate in bilingual pathways and programs ([Californians Together](#)).
- Schools center the needs of multilingual learners (in particular those who are newcomers and socioeconomically disadvantaged) in planning and implementing school policies/programs (e.g., policies that keep students engaged and motivated, that make sure they are healthy and well, and that give them learning opportunities outside of school hours.) ([Californians Together](#)).
- While there are other types of multilingual programs that schools offer to serve multilingual students, the benefits of Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs are that multilingual

students share a classroom with fluent English speakers and learn from each other's languages and cultures. Developmental Bilingual and Transitional Bilingual programs are limited to just English Learners, while One-Way Immersion programs can only serve students from one language group (which might include ELs or English speakers). Moreover, Transitional Bilingual programs do not have the goal of language and academic proficiency in English and a second language ([Californians Together](#)).

- Dual-language immersion (DLI) programs provide academic instruction in multiple languages in order to help students succeed academically while becoming fully bilingual and biliterate. Two-way DLI programs are linguistically integrated, enrolling roughly equal shares of native speakers of English and native speakers of the program's non-English partner language. Research suggests that these linguistically integrated two-way DLI programs are the best way to support ELs' long-term linguistic and academic development ([The Century Foundation](#)).
- Local leaders build partnerships between county offices of education, districts, and colleges and universities to recruit bilingual staff and students into the teacher profession ([Californians Together](#)).
- Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems: English learners experience a coherent, articulated and aligned set of practices and pathways across grade levels and educational segments beginning with a strong foundation in early childhood and continuing through to reclassification, graduation and higher education. These pathways foster the skills, language(s), literacy and knowledge students need for college- and career-readiness and participation in a global, diverse multilingual 21st century world ([California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy](#)).

### ***School Leadership***

- School administrators create a site-wide culture

that values dual language learning and the engagement of families to support dual language learning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

- School administrators should be able to articulate the school's language and learning goals for ML children ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators establish a program-wide approach to meet language and learning goals for ML children and ensure there is clarity among all staff and other school partners about the research-based language program model in use (check out Head Start's Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center resources on [Planned Language Approach](#) for ideas on how to do this in your program) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators give teachers access to coaches to help them plan and use new teaching strategies ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators ensure that system-level approaches and instructional practices align with state-wide policies that support ML children (e.g., guiding principles of the [California English Learner Roadmap](#)) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators support teachers in participating in professional development (e.g., paid time for PD outside of the classroom, substitute support, embedded support) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators provide opportunities for teachers who speak a language other than English to receive PD (or additional support) in their preferred language ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators provide supports for teaching assistants and paraprofessionals ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators provide classroom materials connected to the content in a variety of languages ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators provide translation and

interpretation support, such as community members, advocates, and learning tools ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).

### ***Educator Expertise, Training and Support***

- Schools ensure all educators receive professional learning regarding English Language Development. All educators are prepared to deliver integrated English Language Development within instruction. Schools promote collaboration between content area and EL departments in delivery of professional learning ([Californians Together](#)).
- Each level of the school system (state, county, district, school, pre-school) has leaders and educators who are knowledgeable of and responsive to the strengths and needs of English learners and their communities, and utilize valid assessment and other data systems that inform instruction and continuous improvement; resources and tiered support is provided to ensure strong programs and build the capacity of teachers and staff to build on the strengths and meet the needs of English learners ([California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy](#)).
- Teachers who are not proficient in the child's home language can still take important steps to support it. Learning and using key words in the home language and providing opportunities for children to hear their home language in class shows respect and interest in the children's home languages and makes children feel valued ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Professional development for teachers should help teachers build knowledge of dual language development and promote an asset-based view of linguistic diversity. This includes building knowledge about multilingual language acquisition; evidence-based instructional strategies; building relationships with multilingual children; cultural competence, diversity, asset-based instruction, and inclusion; and developing partnerships and engaging with multilingual families ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Professional development for teachers should teach instructional strategies in context (through modeling in the classroom, exemplar videos, lesson plans, etc.) ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).



- Professional development should allow teachers to engage in opportunities for feedback and reflection of their own practice with a coach, instructional leader, or master teacher ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Professional development should give teachers time to collaborate with other teachers (e.g., through professional learning communities) to learn, discuss, and reflect on practice ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators build their own understanding of dual language development, supporting ML children, and an asset-based view of linguistic diversity ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- School administrators learn how to support teachers in implementing strategies in the classroom ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators engage individually with multilingual children in a warm and inclusive way. Take time to build trust, respect, and strong relationships with children and their families.

## Policies

- Policymakers can ensure that ELs have fair opportunities to access Dual-language immersion programs by locating them in schools with significant EL populations, reserving seats for native speakers of non-English languages, and expanding the number of available DLI seats by investing in growing programs to train more bilingual teachers ([The Century Foundation](#)).
- California's reading legislation is an example of one that recognizes and responds to the literacy needs of bilingual and multilingual students. First, CA AB 130 is committed to "building and strengthening capacity to increase bilingual and biliteracy proficiency" by implementing effective language acquisition programs and interventions. Through CA AB 320, educators will utilize "ongoing and diagnostic techniques that inform teaching, assessment, and early interventions." Such interventions include, the hiring of literacy coaches to support struggling students and establishing biliteracy support programs during after school, weekend, and summer hours. Additionally, California will provide professional development to principals and teacher leaders to lead evidence-based reading instruction for English learners. Bilingual reading specialists will be utilized to support English learner programs ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Next, CA AB 181 is dedicated to family engagement and has created different programs to support this desire. The literacy and biliteracy home visiting program allows "promotora" or family literacy outreach specialists to engage with families to "best support their pupils and every family member in reaching their literacy goals." Family literacy plans are another tool used to create biliteracy goals, benchmarks, and roles for all family members ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Finally, CA AB 181 addresses the significance of

## Family Partnerships

- Educators gather information on each child's language/cultural background from parents upon enrollment. Note that when collecting information from families, educators should gather information that will be helpful for informing instruction. Avoid questions that may be sensitive, such as those concerning citizenship or immigration status ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide families with information on home language development and the benefits of bilingualism and encourage them to continue to speak their home language to their children ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators partner with families to provide varied opportunities for them to come to the classroom to share their language and culture ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators provide parents with children's learning activities to support home language development and connect the curriculum with learning at home ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).
- Educators partner with families in identifying topics or ideas that are of interest to the child and incorporate these in curriculum planning ([Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#)).



culturally relevant texts. The state's goal is to establish school and classroom libraries that include diverse book collections in English and other languages ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- State leaders, including legislators, state agencies, and boards set clear statewide goals for multilingual learner outcomes and track progress towards these goals ([Californians Together](#)).
- States improve tracking and reporting of public data regarding multilingual students and their outcomes. This includes high school graduation and outcomes for Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students, equitable access to rigorous coursework, access to bilingual programs, and teacher supply and attrition ([Californians Together](#)).
- States invest in the expansion of Bilingual Pathways and programs ([Californians Together](#)).
- States invest in community schools and initiatives that support the whole child. This includes ensuring that investments center the needs of ELs, support bilingualism and multilingualism, and are aligned to state goals for multilingual student achievement ([Californians Together](#)).
- States support legislation that address the bilingual teacher shortage. Invest in proven programs, such as Bilingual Teacher Residencies and the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program (BTPDP) and remove barriers to a bilingual authorization ([Californians Together](#)).
- States implement more coherent and transparent academic accountability systems (as described in the 2021 brief [The Accountability System English Learners Deserve](#)). This will require increasing transparency by separating ELs and RFEPs from the EL academic indicators and in any proposed growth model, setting high expectations for ELs in the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) and other indicators

in order to ensure that school districts set clear and ambitious goals to address the needs of ELs ([Californians Together](#)).

- In 2022, the California Department of Education launched the Biliteracy Pathway Recognition awards. These awards include the following recognitions: (a) The Biliteracy Program Participation Recognition. Available to students enrolled in programs leading to biliteracy in preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school; (b) Home Language Development Recognition. Available to students with a home language other than English in preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school, who demonstrate that they are continuing to develop the home language by engaging in age-appropriate activities in the home language; (c) Biliteracy Attainment Recognition. Available to students at the end of elementary school and the end of middle school. Awarded to students who meet specific proficiency criteria in English and one or more languages in addition to English, aligned with the criteria for the SSB ([Californians Together](#)).
- The [Seal of Biliteracy](#) is an award given by a school, school district or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy takes the form of a gold seal that appears on the transcript or diploma of the graduating senior and is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions. In addition to the Seal of Biliteracy that marks attainment of high level mastery of two or more languages, schools and districts are also instituting Bilingual Pathway Awards, recognizing significant steps towards developing biliteracy along a student's trajectory from preschool into high school ([Californians Together](#)).



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Average per-grade change in English Language Arts achievement between third and eighth grades. Well-performing public schools support children's cognitive and social development, providing the foundation for postsecondary and career success ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Schools' contributions to student outcomes, including achievement, attendance, social-emotional learning, college enrollment, and earnings, using value-added models. Note that value-added and other growth models require linking schools to student outcome data (such as test scores from two or more academic years, so growth can be measured). In places that do not already calculate value-added or similar measures, framework users should consult with experts to implement this indicator, as there are different approaches to computing value-added that have different technical and

practical considerations. In practice, many states use other approaches to incorporating student growth data as part of their school accountability systems, which vary in validity and comparability as measures of schools' contributions to student outcomes. Users should also carefully consider the results of value-added measures so as not to reinforce existing inequalities by "explaining away" inter-group differences that might be addressed by system conditions or interventions ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Prioritize, support, and invest in results-driven initiatives to transform low-performing schools into high-quality teaching and learning environments in which all children, including those from low-income families and high-poverty neighborhoods, are present, engaged, and educated to high standards ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of instructors demonstrating above average contributions to student learning, as measured by student growth on state standardized tests or other outcomes (for example, using value-added models or student growth percentiles). Note that value-added and other growth models require linking instructors to student outcome data (such as test scores from two or more academic years, so growth can be measured). The EW Framework cautions against using value-added data as the only measure of teaching effectiveness and recommends also including measures based on classroom observation and student survey data. When

used for high-stakes accountability, measures of teachers' contributions to student learning may have unintended consequences (for example, leading to practices such as "teaching to the test") ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

- Collective teacher efficacy: The collective belief of teachers in their ability to positively affect students. The effect size (1.57) demonstrates a strong correlation to student achievement ([Hattie](#)).

## Policies

### Policies

- Teacher evaluation systems that use Value-Add Measures to determine the impact a teacher has on student learning.



## Indicators

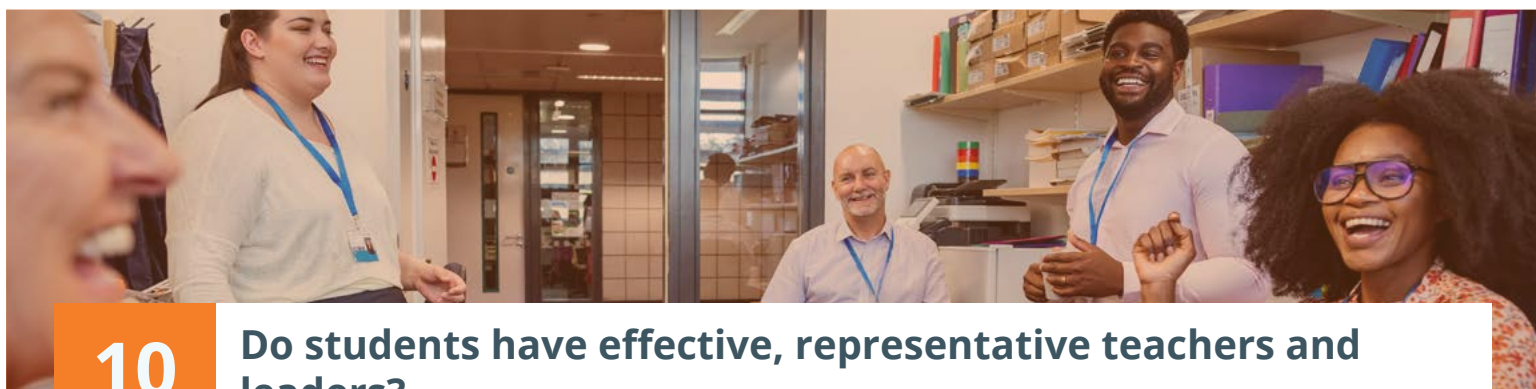
### Systems indicators

- Students' perceptions of their teacher's effectiveness, using a survey instrument such as the Pedagogical Effectiveness subscale of the [Panorama Student Survey](#), the [Tripod Student Survey](#), the Ambitious Instruction and Supportive Environment domains of the [5Essentials Survey](#), or the [Elevate survey](#)'s Feedback for Growth, Meaningful Work, Student Voice, Teacher Caring,

Learning Goals, Supportive Teaching, and Well-organized Class scales ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### Policies

- States and districts implement a validated student perception survey, such as Panorama or Tripod, to systematically collect student feedback. The data gathered informs continuous improvement efforts and integrates into teacher, leader, school, and district accountability frameworks.



## 10 Do students have effective, representative teachers and leaders?

## Why it matters



Effective, representative teachers and leaders are essential for advancing third grade reading outcomes, as they shape instructional quality, school culture and equitable access to literacy success. Research consistently shows that strong school leadership and effective teaching are among the most significant factors influencing student achievement ([Leithwood et al., 2004](#); [Kane et al., 2016](#); [Bryk, et. al](#)).

Teachers who implement evidence-based literacy instruction and use data-driven approaches ensure that all students develop foundational reading skills ([National Reading Panel, 2000](#)). At the same time, school leaders play a critical role in creating the conditions for success by providing high-quality professional development, aligning resources with literacy goals and fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement ([Steiner, 2020](#)). Research on principals'

impact on student achievement highlights this influence, showing that highly effective principals can increase student learning by the equivalent of two to seven additional months in a given school year, whereas ineffective principals can negatively impact achievement by the same margin ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

Additionally, representative teachers and leaders — those who reflect the diversity of their student populations — help build stronger connections with families and communities, enhance student engagement, and support culturally responsive instruction, all of which contribute to improved literacy outcomes ([Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2021](#)). By investing in highly effective, diverse educators and leaders, schools can drive meaningful improvements in early literacy and close achievement gaps.



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of school leaders rated as effective, using an evaluation system that includes multiple measures, such as the Administrator Evaluation component of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Staff surveys that can be used to measure effective school leadership include the Effective Leaders subcomponent of the UChicago 5E's survey instrument, Panorama Teacher and Staff Survey, or The New Teacher Project's (Tntp) Instructional Culture Insight Survey. However, no research has emerged at this point to show that staff surveys are valid and reliable measures of school leader effectiveness, and survey measures run the risk of offering a biased or potentially politicized rating of a leader, underscoring the importance of examining multiple measures ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Ensure program directors and school principals have the capacity to provide instructional leadership that supports effective teaching ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Louisiana's Content Leaders, who are local educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to provide high-quality, content-rich, and curriculum specific professional development to teachers in their school ([Louisiana Department of Education](#)).
- Louisiana's Mentor Teachers, who are local educators who have the knowledge and skills to effectively coach and support new and resident teachers in their districts ([Louisiana Department of Education](#)).
- District or LEA leadership prioritizes early grades reading in system level goals and priorities, like Eddie Rangel (CEO) and Matthew Rooney (Chief School Officer) of Adelante Schools in Indiana ([Relay/GSE](#)).



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Teacher retention: Percentage of teachers who return to teaching in the same school from year to year. Educator retention can be computed using administrative records from districts' or states' staff data management systems linking teachers and principals to schools from one year to the next ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- School leader tenure: Percentage of school leaders who have served in their current positions for less than two years, two to three years, and four or more years. For school leaders, the Education-to-Workforce Framework

recommends examining their tenure in the same school. A recommended best practice is to disaggregate retention by measures of educator effectiveness, such as those based on teacher performance ratings or value-added scores, to better assess the impact of staff turnover ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

- North Carolina's Teacher Working Conditions Survey offers a systematic way to capture teachers' perspectives on the conditions in which they work ([NC TWC Survey](#)).

### Policies

- States and/or districts have career progression pathways to support the retention of highly-effective teachers, such as Louisiana's Content-



Leaders and Mentor Teacher roles ([Louisiana Department of Education](#)).

- States and/or districts have differentiated compensation structures that provide higher

rates of pay for teachers demonstrating the most effectiveness, such as Texas' Teacher Incentive Allotment ([TEA Teacher Incentive Allotment](#)).

## Teacher leadership

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Percentage of teacher leaders rated effective based on multiple measures of performance ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teacher leaders who occupy hybrid roles ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teacher leaders with a leadership endorsement/certificate ([National Education Association](#)).
- Presence of an educator shortage ([National Education Association](#)).

### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- Teacher leaders who are experts in the Science of Reading and the literacy curriculum play a role in the coaching and development of

literacy instruction for a group of teachers.

- Districts have pathways for teachers who want to remain in their teaching role but make a bigger impact and larger salary. For example, North Carolina's Advanced Teaching Roles, including the Multi-Classroom Teacher-Leader Role ([Department of Public Instruction for the state of North Carolina](#)).

#### Policies

- State codifies the Teacher Leadership Competencies and/or other standards for teacher leadership ([National Education Association](#)).
- State includes a state-level endorsement/certificate for teacher leaders ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides resources to complete voluntary national certification and endorsements that promote teacher leadership opportunities ([National Education Association](#)).

## Teacher recruiting and hiring

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- The percentage of teaching positions that remain unfilled at the start of the school year ([Tennessee Department of Education](#)).
- The number of applicants per open teaching position, a common measure used across districts.

### Practices

#### Practices

- Districts begin cultivation and recruitment a

year prior to the present school year ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts have plans to recruit and retain accomplished educators ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts have plans to recruit educators for shortage areas, such as special education and second language acquisition ([National Education Association](#)).
- Hiring high quality staff ([Results for America](#)).
- State tracks educator shortages ([National Education Association](#)).





11

## Do students have access to curricula aligned to the Science of Reading research and that includes explicit phonics instruction?

### Why it matters



Ensuring students have access to curricula aligned with the Science of Reading is essential for building strong foundational literacy skills and achieving third grade reading proficiency. Research shows that effective reading instruction must include explicit, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension ([National Reading Panel, 2000](#)). Curricula grounded in these principles provide structured, sequential instruction that prevents learning gaps and supports all students,

particularly those at risk for reading difficulties ([Moats, 2020](#)).

Studies also highlight that students using high-quality, research-based curricula make greater reading gains than those using inconsistent or less structured programs ([Steiner, 2020](#)). Additionally, aligning curricula with the Science of Reading ensures that instruction is data-driven and evidence-based, supporting teachers in delivering effective literacy instruction ([Foorman et al., 2016](#)).

Access to quality, culturally responsive curriculum *Key source: Education-to-Workforce Framework*



### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- Schools and instructors use a standards-aligned core course curriculum that meets quality standards (as defined by EdReports) and is culturally relevant, centering the lived experiences and heritage of students' ethnic or racial backgrounds ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- The school/system uses standards-aligned and coherent curricular materials effectively to facilitate data-driven instruction anchored in the Science of Reading ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Tier 1 curricular materials are anchored in the Science of Reading and include a systematic and explicit foundational skills program as well as content-rich reading materials that support knowledge building ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The Tier 1 curriculum, assessments, and instructional resources in use are closely aligned ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- When and if appropriate, additional culturally and/or linguistically relevant materials are used alongside curricular materials to support students in making personal connections ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Tiered intervention programs in use are structured and systematic; they amplify and accelerate learning from Tier 1 materials ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- Curriculum-embedded assessments and materials are used seamlessly to design whole- and small-group learning experiences that move every student toward reading proficiency ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The school/system uses quality data and assessment resources consistently, cohesively, and strategically to drive instructional decision making for all students ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Implement developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning standards that reflect approaches to learning, social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development; and build foundational skills in literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Schools adopt content-rich, developmentally appropriate curricula linked to standards and assessments ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

## Policies

- Legislation in an estimated 38 states (as of January 2024) establishes requirements for the type of curricula and materials schools can use to identify reading difficulties ([Bellwether](#)).
- Tennessee's *Tennessee Literacy Success Act* (2021) requires English language arts textbooks and materials to come from a state-approved list with a focus on foundational skills and knowledge building. It requires districts and schools to develop foundational literacy skills plans ([Bellwether](#)).
- Georgia's *Georgia Early Literacy Act* (2023) has the state board of education establish

standards to measure literacy, approve a list of curricula for K-3 reading, and has districts adopt high-quality materials as designated by the state ([Bellwether](#)).

- Indiana's *Science of Reading* act (2023) has school districts and public charter schools adopt curricula aligned with the Science of Reading and students' reading proficiency; they may not adopt curricula based on the [three-cueing model](#). (In three-cueing, students use "cues" in the text to make educated guesses about unknown words. The three common sources of cues are context, sentence structure, and letters.) ([Bellwether](#)).
- Connecticut's *Right to Read* act (2021) requires all districts to implement early literacy reading curricula that are evidenced based and focused on oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension ([Bellwether](#)).
- A high-quality curriculum not only provides a clear framework for teachers, but also ensures coherence across grades and schools. It is essential that legislators promote the selection and periodic review of evidence-based instructional materials and resources in districts. This will help determine if they meet students' needs or if additional materials and supports are necessary. Don't remove resources, even flawed ones, without providing educators with effective alternatives first. (Model state: Delaware) ([Shanker Institute](#)).

## Assessments

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- The school/system uses quality data and assessment resources consistently, cohesively, and strategically to drive instructional decision making for all students ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- The assessment system in place includes a universal screener that assesses all students' proficiency on nationally-normed, grade-level benchmarks at least three times per year ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The assessment system in place includes progress monitoring tools to determine how

students are progressing toward their individual goals and student growth targets based on nationally-normed benchmarks ([Instruction Partners](#)).

- The assessment system in place includes a diagnostic assessment that pinpoints the specific skills that students have mastered and/or where they need further instruction and practice ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- The assessment system in place includes formative assessments (e.g., from the curriculum, anecdotal records) to assess students' mastery of what is being taught. Note that it is important to consider that additional or alternative assessment data may be necessary to yield a holistic picture of students' knowledge and skills, particularly for students in priority groups. For instance, a test given in English may not capture the language skills of a Spanish-speaking student; providing them an assessment in Spanish may offer educators a more accurate picture of their skills and knowledge ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Assessment and evaluation honor multilingual learners' (MLs') primary languages and current English proficiency levels. There is a written policy to ensure that MLs are not held back in the curriculum sequence or small-group work based on primary language influence or current English proficiency level ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Each student has clear, individual learning goals and learning targets that teachers, students, and families/caregivers understand ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- There is a clear and efficient data cycle process in place that supports leaders and teachers in collecting and analyzing student data as well as adjusting instruction based on what is and is not working ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- When analyzing student data, all educators providing or supporting early literacy instruction are included (e.g., K-2 and language development teachers) ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Student data is gathered from multiple forms of assessment (e.g., universal screener, progress monitoring, curriculum assessment, teachers' observation notes about skills individual students have and have not yet mastered) ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Data is analyzed collaboratively from each form of assessment alongside student goals to determine what is working and what may need to be refined to support students in moving toward skill mastery ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Data analysis adjusts tier placement for students based on clear entry and exit criteria for intervention with an emphasis on exiting students as flexibly and quickly as possible ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Student data is disaggregated and analyzed by demographics; team members use this data to ensure that the needs of students in priority groups are centered when making instructional decisions ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Families and caregivers are kept up-to-date on their child's progress toward goals and play an active role in supporting their child's journey to becoming a skilled reader ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Ensure child assessment tools are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Schools implement appropriate, comparable instruments for measuring results along the continuum from birth through age 8 that are based on common standards for early childhood programs and practitioners ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

## Policies

- As of January 2024, Legislation in approximately 45 states establishes requirements for the types of assessments schools can use to identify reading difficulties or mandates a process districts must use to select assessments ([Bellwether](#)).
- Connecticut's *Right to Read* act (2021) establishes approved reading assessments to track progress ([Bellwether](#)).
- Tennessee's policy on Universal Reading Screeners: All students in grades K-3 are screened three times annually to identify reading deficiencies. The state provides a free option — the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener — and districts can choose from a list of approved universal reading screeners to determine whether any student is struggling with specific reading skills ([SCORE Tennessee Policy Pillars](#)).



12

## Do students attend school in systems with adequate funding to support curricula, professional learning and ongoing coaching needed to implement the Science of Reading?

### Why it matters



Adequate funding supports equal access to curricula and professional learning aligned with the Science of Reading, which enables the improvement of literacy outcomes for all students. Research shows that high-quality, evidence-based curricula — those grounded in the Science of Reading — require investment in both resources and training for educators ([National Reading Panel, 2000](#); [Moats, 2020](#)). Without sufficient funding, schools may struggle to purchase comprehensive, standards-aligned materials or provide teachers with ongoing professional development necessary to implement them effectively ([Steiner, 2020](#)).

Funding also supports equitable access to these resources, ensuring that schools in underserved or underfunded areas can access the same high-quality curricula and professional learning opportunities as those in more affluent districts ([Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012](#)). Investment in professional learning is especially important, as teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver explicit, systematic reading instruction, and ongoing professional development ensures that instructional practices remain aligned with the latest research ([Foorman et al., 2016](#)).

#### Expenditures per student

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Per pupil expenditures. For elementary and secondary schools, data are reported annually at the state, district, and school levels through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) Per Pupil Expenditure Transparency website. Disparities in funding can be assessed vertically at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as horizontally between schools within the same district or postsecondary institutions within the same state ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Equity Factor, a measure that indicates variance in per-pupil funding within a state (see [this brief by New America](#) for more information) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

#### Systems indicators

- Equitable weighted student funding formula (Data sources: Local policy and practice assessments) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).



- Equity factor, or the degree of variance between district per-student funding to state average (Data source: U.S. Department of Education) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Funding that is linked to compliance with common quality standards and is flexible, blendable, and sufficient for the continuum of services and supports needed to get children ready for school and to provide school experiences that help them become strong readers ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Adequate school funding to ensure access to the resources that afford every child the opportunity to learn ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- State has an independent body of stakeholders that includes active pre-K through grade 12

educators and administrators who annually assess if state funding is sufficient to provide all students the opportunity to meet rigorous academic standards ([National Education Association](#)).

### Policies

- Districts implement measures to broaden their tax base ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use “pupil weights” in their base formula to adjust for diverse student needs ([National Education Association](#)).
- State funds local efforts to diversify revenue streams ([National Education Association](#)).
- Passage of voter-approved children’s funds at local levels ([Children’s Funding Project](#)).
- State implements measures to broaden its tax base ([National Education Association](#)).
- Access to resources: School finance equity ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).



13

**Do students have access to teachers trained, coached and supported to teach the Science of Reading?**

## Why it matters



Teachers who are trained in the Science of Reading and evidence-based practices that develop students’ skills in each of the five pillars of reading are better equipped to deliver high-quality instruction, identify students’ individual needs and provide targeted interventions ([Moats, 2020](#)). Research shows that when teachers receive ongoing coaching and support, they are more

likely to implement effective practices consistently, leading to improved student outcomes ([Steiner, 2020](#)). By investing in the professional development of teachers to ensure they are skilled in the Science of Reading, schools can enhance the quality of literacy instruction, improve student achievement and close gaps in reading proficiency, particularly for students from underserved communities.





## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of courses taught by full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers (that is, teachers other than substitutes or those with emergency or provisional licenses) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of courses taught by teachers certified to teach the given subject or grade level ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of kindergarten teachers that have passed a pre-service performance assessment prior to obtaining their initial license ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teacher preparation programs covering the five components of scientifically-based reading instruction. (Data source: National Council on Teacher Quality Reviews) ([Bellwether](#)).
- Teacher preparation programs dedicate adequate course time to teaching the core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) or assessing candidates in the core components. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) recommends preparation programs dedicate at least seven instructional hours (slightly more than two weeks of course time) to phonemic awareness, eight instructional hours to phonics, four instructional hours to fluency, six instructional hours to vocabulary, and 9 instructional hours to comprehension. The minimum number of instructional hours needed to address the core concepts for each component was determined based on feedback from NCTQ's Expert Advisory Panel and the results from an Open Comment Survey ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- Teacher preparation programs measure candidates using objective measures of knowledge, including tests, quizzes, and written graded assignments ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Teacher preparation programs give aspiring teachers opportunities to practice providing instruction, in a simulated or real classroom setting, or opportunities to practice giving an assessment. In teacher preparation, practice takes many forms, such as one-on-one tutoring with a student, administering a mock assessment to fellow teacher candidates, or conducting a lesson during a field experience ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Exemplary teacher preparation programs equip aspiring teachers to support a diverse range of students in learning to read, including English language learners, struggling readers (such as students with dyslexia), and students who speak language varieties other than mainstream English (e.g., African American English). These programs emphasize structured literacy approaches, incorporating direct, explicit instruction in the five components of reading, screening and progress monitoring assessments, and multi-tiered systems of support to address reading difficulties (NCTQ Teacher Prep Review).([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Percentage of preparation program graduates surveyed indicating satisfaction with their preparedness to serve as the teacher-of-record ([National Education Association](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Districts partner with teacher preparation programs on teacher residencies and induction ([National Education Association](#)).

- Preparation programs survey graduates about their preparedness to serve as the teacher-of-record and report their response rates ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs use pre-service performance assessments to determine candidate preparedness prior to program completion and/or initial licensure ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs work with local school districts to recruit high-achieving high school graduates to pursue careers in education ([National Education Association](#)).
- State leaders set specific, explicit, and comprehensive preparation standards for scientifically based reading instruction. Standards need to explicitly identify what candidates should learn (e.g., prep programs should teach phonemic awareness, why this area is important for children’s reading development and attainment of the alphabetic principle, what common patterns are in the development of phonemic awareness, specific goals of instruction such as blending and segmentation, and how to assess students’ phonemic awareness) ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders hold teacher preparation programs accountable for implementation of scientifically based reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders incorporate a specific evaluation of reading instruction in program renewal or reauthorization processes and take action if programs are not aligned to the state’s standards for scientifically based reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- The state’s reading instruction standards must be explicit and coupled with implementation support (training, feedback, high-quality curricula) and accountability (data and evidence used to inform decisions about program approval) to see widespread results ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders conduct site visits to teacher preparation programs and include literacy experts. Often program approval or reauthorization processes focus on broad program operations. Focusing specifically on the teaching of reading will support the improvement of elementary teacher prep programs as well as early childhood and special education prep programs ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders visit classrooms, talk to teachers and staff, and collect qualitative data to help inform approval decisions for teacher preparation programs ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders make conditional approval of teacher prep programs — with clear timelines and identified areas for improvement — an option. States should consider in their regulations whether conditional approval is an option for the authorizing entity (either the department of education, state board, or higher education commission). While reading could be a weak area for a program, it may have other strengths. Allowing conditional approval, along with clear expectations and strict timelines, can bring about the desired change while permitting the program to operate ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders require a reading licensure test aligned with scientifically based reading instruction for all elementary teachers to earn licensure, and publish the pass rates ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders verify the state-required test is strong and measures candidates’ knowledge of the core components of reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Licensure test requires all elementary teachers — as well as early childhood educators, special education teachers, and reading specialists who instruct PK-5 students — to demonstrate

their knowledge of how to teach reading ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- At a minimum, the state should provide data to programs on first-attempt and best-attempt pass rates on reading licensure tests. This will provide feedback to programs on how candidates are doing, and allow programs to track and support improvement efforts ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- State leaders deploy a comprehensive strategy to implement scientifically-based reading instruction and prioritize teacher preparation. Take a comprehensive approach to policy and practice, with an emphasis on teacher preparation that impacts student learning in reading and includes approaches to support struggling readers, English learners, and speakers of language varieties other than mainstream English ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- In addition to holding prep programs accountable for reading instruction, states can build teacher prep capacity through various means, such as inviting teacher prep faculty to join statewide professional development, supporting programs with competitive funding to revise their programs, or creating communities of practice where programs can learn from other exemplary programs as to how they made the transition ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Some states, such as North Carolina and Alabama, have invited external reviewers such as the Barksdale Reading Institute and TPI-US to inspect their teacher preparation programs (e.g., observe courses and interview faculty and teacher candidates) and report on their findings ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- To send an important signal that reading instruction matters, state leaders such as governors, state education chiefs, state board members, and university system leaders should adopt their own platform-specific goals for increasing reading outcomes, set standards

for the institutions they lead, and ask their organizations and staff to report on progress toward those goals ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- School districts strategically recruit new hires. To the extent possible, focus hiring efforts on teachers from preparation programs adequately teaching scientifically based reading instruction, or from stronger programs in your region ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Training teachers is expensive. Focusing on hiring from programs already providing a foundation in reading instruction will save a school district money and will better support students' literacy outcomes ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- School districts should prioritize partnerships for field experiences with programs committed to teaching scientifically based reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Student teaching is an excellent opportunity to hire strong candidates early. Bringing in student teachers from programs providing instruction in scientifically based reading provides an opportunity to hire from this pool early on, and it sends a message to other programs that they need to strengthen their reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- School districts match student teacher candidates to mentor teachers with a proven track record of effectiveness in teaching reading based on the science. Avoid assigning student teachers to teachers who would be poor models of teaching reading or use contrary practices in their instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- School districts provide professional development opportunities for teachers already in the classroom who were not prepared in scientifically based reading instruction practices. While not exhaustive, some resources to consider include LETRS, Neuhaus Education Center, CORE Learning, and Essential Actions: A

Handbook for Implementing WIDA's Framework for English Language Development Standards ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- School districts review, select, and carefully implement high-quality reading curricula approved by the state or other external reviewers and share curriculum resources with teacher preparation partners ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Community advocates, teachers, and parents ask questions and advocate to ensure scientifically based reading instruction is used in local schools ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Community advocates, teachers, and parents send letters to a university's board of trustees and their district's school board, or testify at public hearings advocating for professional learning and curricula aligned to scientifically based reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Community advocates, teachers, and parents advocate for adoption — both at the district and state levels — of curricula (including core curricula, intervention programs, and supplemental materials) that provide systematic and explicit reading instruction to teach the five components of scientifically based reading instruction ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Community advocates, teachers, and parents partner with other advocates in the area to learn more about scientifically based reading instruction, find additional resources, and join community efforts to improve your local schools ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Community advocates, teachers, and parents advocate for local schools to focus their hiring practices on teachers who are well prepared and committed to scientifically based reading instruction, especially local preparation programs earning a high grade in the *Teacher Prep Review* ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

## Policies

- Districts mandate successful completion of a residency program prior to obtaining initial licensure ([National Education Association](#)).
- Preparation programs require school-based experiences beyond a semester of student teaching ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for induction programs ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for preparation programs to establish residency programs with local school districts ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides resources to grow preparation programs in minority-serving institutions ([National Education Association](#)).
- Investing in hiring, training and retaining a high-quality and diverse workforce of educators ([Urban Institute](#)).
- As of January 2024, state legislation aimed at improving teacher certification or license renewal. An estimated 17 states require pre-service teachers to pass a test demonstrating knowledge of reading instruction and in-service teachers to earn a credential or pass a test to renew their license ([Bellwether](#)).
- As of January 2024, state legislation aimed at improving teacher preparation. An estimated 19 states require teacher preparation programs to review course offerings and make changes to bring instructional approaches in line with evidence-based practices ([Bellwether](#)).
- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act provided professional development training via Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) to elementary teachers and leaders, as well as included faculty from institutes of higher education on a voluntary basis, to begin to create a common language across the entire education system ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- In 2016, Mississippi began requiring the



Foundations of Reading test for all elementary teachers to earn a license, which also provided a common indicator across all programs of whether teacher candidates were obtaining the knowledge and skills they need to teach scientifically based reading instruction. Later, the state factored this data into more frequent program reviews, including annual reports on the percentage of candidates who passed the reading test by number of attempts ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- Beginning in 2018, Mississippi, with philanthropic support, provided intense professional learning and support to faculty in prep programs. This support included on-site training modules, texts, and other instructional videos; classroom instruction; one-on-one mentoring; and seminars. Most importantly, the state department of education studied the impact of the professional learning partnership in order to understand continued areas of needed support and to celebrate successes ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- To support sustainability, Mississippi redesigned educator prep program guidelines and program approval requirements to prescribe the 15 credit hours dedicated to literacy, and required the two courses — Early Literacy 1 and Early Literacy 2 — to align with syllabi from the Mississippi Higher Education Literacy Council matrix, which also includes an emphasis on dyslexia and English language learners. Additionally, a third course, Fundamentals of Reading in the Upper Elementary Grades, is also required ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Tennessee’s legislature passed the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act* in 2021. Among its provisions was one requiring educator prep programs to emphasize an evidence-based, foundational skills approach to teaching ([Bellwether](#)).
- Georgia’s legislature passed the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* in 2023. Among its provisions was

one requiring teacher certification assessments to be aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction ([Bellwether](#)).

- Indiana’s legislature passed the *Science of Reading* in 2023 requiring teacher preparation programs to use curricula that instruct teachers on the Science of Reading. For teachers seeking licenses to teach reading, a portion of their credit hours must be in teaching scientifically-based reading ([Bellwether](#)).
- In July 2023, Ohio passed legislation mandating a shift to the Science of Reading in public schools, requiring curriculum, teacher training, and reading intervention approaches to align with Science of Reading principles ([Ohio Capital Journal](#)).
- Indiana’s *Science of Reading* law requires the Indiana Department of Education to conduct a review of teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment with the Science of Reading ([Bellwether](#)).
- Connecticut’s legislature passed the *Right to Read* in 2021 requiring the state’s Department of Education to develop a [Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success](#) that focuses on ensuring alignment between reading standards and teacher preparation courses ([Bellwether](#)).
- In 2012, Colorado passed the READ Act — legislation that focused on changing how current teachers taught reading in schools and moved classroom instruction across the state toward evidence-based practices. The state was unequivocally coming down on the side of scientifically based reading practices, and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) was committed to reflecting that intent in how it reviewed educator preparation ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- In 2016, Colorado’s state board of education issued new literacy standards for elementary teachers, to which preparation programs were required to align their course content. The new standards were aligned to scientifically based

reading instruction and represented an explicit directive to prep programs to update their coursework to align to evidence-based practices ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- Developing an effective teacher workforce by prioritizing teacher education programs rooted in evidence-based reading instruction ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- Utah's reading instruction legislation calls for a statewide literacy panel. This panel is designed to work with educator preparation programs, university teacher preparation program faculty, deans of education and literacy leadership fellows to advance the Science of Reading and the Science of Reading instruction ([Shanker Institute](#)).

## Teacher experience

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of teachers with less than one year, one to five years, and more than five years of experience. Research consistently shows that more experienced teachers make greater contributions to student achievement, especially compared to teachers who are early in their careers. After teachers gain about five years of experience, however, the difference between a more or less experienced teacher (that is, one with 10 versus 5 years of experience) is not significant ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Qualified, experienced teachers for all students, especially the students who need them most ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- The Texas Teachers' Incentive Allotment aims to incentivize effective teachers to work in high-need areas and rural districts by providing funding for districts to reward outstanding teachers with the potential for six-figure salaries, and to support their professional development ([Teacher Incentive Allotment Texas](#)).

## Representational racial and ethnic diversity of educators

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Same-race student-teacher ratio by race/ethnicity (Data sources: Local school, LEA or SEA human resources, administrative and/or enrollment data) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#) and [StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Educational staff composition by race and ethnicity compared to student composition by race and ethnicity ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#) and [StriveTogether 2021](#)).

- Percentage of program sites that support a language other than English ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of program sites where children from focal populations are exposed to staff in their program who reflect their own identities ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of workforce members who are fluent in the language spoken by the children they serve ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Districts have plans to recruit educators from underrepresented populations ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts have plans to retain educators from underrepresented populations ([West Ed](#)).
- Re-evaluate “last-in, first-out” practices which are more likely to remove early career teachers who identify as people of color ([TNTP](#)).
- Engaging young men of color in early childhood education initiatives, like the Literacy Lab’s Leading Men Fellowship ([Results for America](#)).

## Policies

- State policy supports recruitment of promising future educators, including underrepresented populations ([National Education Association](#)).
- Making educator diversity data visible and actionable to all stakeholders ([Education Trust](#)).
- Setting clear goals at the state, district and teacher preparation levels to increase educator diversity ([Education Trust](#)).
- Investing in efforts to retain teachers of color that improve working conditions and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth ([Education Trust](#)).

## Classroom observation of instructional practice

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Students have access to early literacy instruction that meets the criteria for strong implementation as defined by the Foundational Skills Observation Tool ([Instruction Partners](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Teachers’ overall and subscale scores on an observation rubric associated with an educator observation system; examples of common frameworks include the [Danielson’s Framework for Teaching](#) and the [Marzano Causal Teacher Evaluation Model](#) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of teachers rated effective based on multiple measures of performance ([National Education Association](#)).
- Teacher observations, instructional quality reviews and teacher/student interaction measures ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).
- Teacher coaching and professional development

([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating alignment among professional learning, standards, curriculum and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with professional learning time and opportunities ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators who participated in job-embedded professional learning opportunities in the previous year ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of workforce members who receive training in culturally-responsive instruction, especially to understand a child’s developmental progress to inform instruction ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of workforce members who receive training on reducing or eliminating bias in their work ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of workforce members who receive training on trauma-informed care or responsiveness ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Districts design, monitor and implement evaluation systems based on state framework in partnership with educators and their associations ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts align professional learning with standards, curriculum and assessments ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use evaluations aligned with induction ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use performance evaluations employing multiple measures ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide “peer assistance” or “peer assistance and review” (PAR) teams ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts have professional learning plans, including induction and mentoring, for teachers, education support professionals (ESPs) and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts integrate theories, research and models of human learning into the planning and design of professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide educators with targeted support based on formative and summative evaluation results ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide extra resources and assistance for those educators in hard-to-staff schools ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide funding for educators to access professional learning that addresses new education research and technology that will help improve instruction or support for students ([National Education Association](#)).
- Assess the quality of learning environments, teacher-child interaction, teaching strategies, and children’s progress, and use the data for continuous improvement ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Districts provide ongoing professional learning and support to administrators, including training in equity and racial and social justice to better

support Indigenous educators and students as well as educators and students of color ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts provide teacher leadership development ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts support regular, job-embedded professional learning opportunities ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use a variety of student, educator and systems data to plan, assess and evaluate professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- Providing training and classroom materials ([Results for America](#)).

## Policies

- State develops a comprehensive culturally-responsive teaching policy, covering equity and racial and social justice, to increase educators’ cultural and linguistic competence through pre-service education, licensure and ongoing professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding and technical assistance to strengthen professional learning in areas with high concentrations of poverty, Indigenous students and students of color, with emphasis on mentoring, implicit bias and cultural competency ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for job-embedded professional learning opportunities to help educators improve their instructional repertoire ([National Education Association](#)).
- State policy mandates multiprofessional collaboration on educator support and evaluation systems staffed by active pre-K through 12 educators ([National Education Association](#)).
- State policy requires that evaluations be based on multiple measures of performance to determine effectiveness. Measures may include classroom observations, portfolios, leadership roles and professional learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- State provides funding for “peer assistance” and “peer assistance and review” (PAR) teams ([National Education Association](#)).



## Teacher rewards, recognition and benefits

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Percentage of teachers surveyed indicating satisfaction with the conditions of employment ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers surveyed indicating satisfaction with the terms of employment ([National Education Association](#)).

### Practices

#### Practices

- Implement strategies to improve salaries, benefits, and working conditions for early childhood educators, and support compensation parity across early learning programs (child care, Pre-K and K-3 classrooms) ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Districts have differentiated pay structures for clearly defined roles and responsibilities that account for hybrid/varied educator roles within a school ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts offer financial incentives for educators

working in hard-to-staff schools ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts offer incentives for teachers to take on differentiated or hybrid roles ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts offer teachers starting salaries comparable to other professionals with similar skills, knowledge and education. Additionally, education support professionals (ESPs) are paid at least a minimum wage ([National Education Association](#)).
- State and/or district contributions for health coverage increase at least enough to keep up with health care inflation ([National Education Association](#)).
- State or district provides access to affordable, quality health insurance for education employees and their families ([National Education Association](#)).
- State or district recognizes highly effective teachers through awards and additional pay, like the Texas Teacher Incentive Allotment ([Teacher Incentive Allotment](#)).

## Teacher voice in decision making

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with the number of opportunities to participate in district policy setting ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with the number of opportunities to participate in school policy setting ([National Education Association](#)).

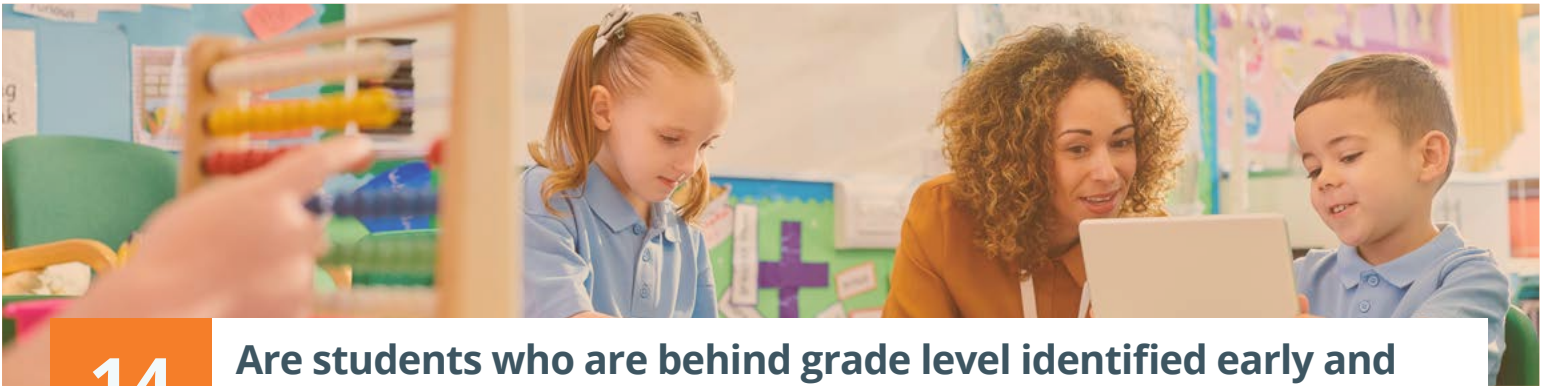
### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- Districts obtain educator input on instructional minutes ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide formal opportunities for educators to participate in district policy setting (e.g., accountability systems, hiring and evaluation of administrators) ([National Education Association](#)).

## Policies

- Districts dedicate funding to support educator engagement with educator leadership organizations and learning networks ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts dedicate resources to design professional learning that supports educator leadership and teacher agency ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts dedicate resources toward lifting and amplifying educator voice (e.g., dedicate funds to engagement) ([National Education Association](#)).
- State has an autonomous standards board, the majority of whom are active pre-K through grade 12 educators and are ethnically and racially representative of the student body ([National Education Association](#)).
- State requires that all planning and decision-making bodies related to the educator profession include active pre-K through grade 12 educators ([National Education Association](#)).



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**Are students who are behind grade level identified early and provided high-quality interventions aligned to the curriculum?**

## Why it matters



Early identification and intervention for students who are behind grade level in reading are critical for long-term academic success. Research shows that students who do not develop strong foundational literacy skills by third grade are more likely to experience academic struggles, higher dropout rates and lower lifetime earnings ([Hernandez, 2011](#)). Early intervention, particularly high-dosage tutoring and structured literacy instruction focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and writing, has been shown to accelerate reading growth and prevent long-term difficulties ([Slavin et al., 2011](#); [Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007](#)). Studies also confirm that early, intensive reading interventions are

significantly more effective than later remediation, as they capitalize on the brain's plasticity during critical developmental periods ([Torgesen, 2004](#); [Foorman et al., 2016](#)). Frequent progress monitoring ensures that interventions remain responsive to student needs, maximizing their impact ([Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006](#)). Without timely support, struggling readers are likely to fall further behind, reinforcing cycles of academic inequity ([Stanovich, 1986](#)). Investing in early, evidence-based interventions is essential for closing literacy gaps and promoting equitable educational opportunities.



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of children with identified concerns who are connected to services ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of children needing selected special education services in kindergarten who were not identified and connected to services before kindergarten ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating feelings of confidence in analyzing and interpreting formative and summative assessment data ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating satisfaction with the time allotted to analyze assessment results and inform instruction ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers indicating satisfaction with the sources used to measure student growth ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers surveyed indicating assessments adhere to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers surveyed indicating satisfaction with the quality of student assessments ([National Education Association](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Promote comprehensive screening and early detection of developmental delays and link to referral, care coordination, and intervention. ([Alliance for Early Success](#))
- Districts provide resources and funding for job-embedded professional learning for teachers

to become proficient users of formative and summative assessment data ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts release assessment results in time to inform learning ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts train school personnel to interpret data system results to inform and improve instruction and identify needed supports ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts use both formative and summative student assessments that adhere to the principles of UDL ([National Education Association](#)).
- School and system schedules allocate no less than 120 minutes a day for students to engage in Tier 1 literacy instruction that includes foundational skills, language comprehension, and differentiated small-group instruction ([Instruction Partners](#)).
- Students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities can learn to read with additional support and intervention focused on developing both foundational decoding skills and language comprehension ([Bellwether](#)).
- Teachers of struggling readers need to be able to teach the five components of reading. All students, and especially struggling readers, need explicit, systematic teaching of literacy (including phonemes and letter-sound relationships), practice, student-teacher interaction, carefully chosen examples, decodable text, and feedback that corrects their errors ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- Aspiring teachers must be able to assess and identify which specific foundational reading skills a student is struggling with, what interventions to deploy to address this deficit (including knowing when to bring in a reading specialist or the help of a reading coach), and how to monitor progress based on research-based methods ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).

- Teachers need to be empowered to recognize the profile of children who are at-risk, or struggling readers. This includes the ability to not only recognize the signs of dyslexia, but also appreciate the intensity and explicitness of the instruction a student may need to become a skilled reader ([NCTQ Teacher Prep Review](#)).
- The What Works Clearinghouse recommends assigning these students who are off track to a trained adult advocate who provides individualized support to meet their academic, social, and emotional needs. This individual can identify students' unmet needs and either directly provide support or coordinate additional support. An advocate is a student's "go-to person" for the resources and support they need ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Policies

- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act requires the state's Department of Education to establish a panel to identify and adopt appropriate screening tools. The state implemented regular universal screening for early identification of struggling students and development of individual reading plans ([Bellwether](#)).
- Georgia's *Georgia Early Literacy Act* (2023) has the state board of education establish standards to measure literacy and create a list of screening tools to identify struggling readers ([Bellwether](#)).
- State accountability system holds schools accountable for multiple measures of school quality and student success (multiple measures may include chronic absenteeism, school climate and access to advanced and rigorous courses) ([National Education Association](#)).
- State develops a policy that requires the use of both formative and summative student assessments that adhere to the principles of UDL ([National Education Association](#)).
- State has a comprehensive, aligned and integrated information management system that enables districts and schools to analyze, evaluate and continuously improve student, educator and school performance ([National Education Association](#)).
- School and district accountability systems advance continuous improvement and a comprehensive vision of student success ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Legislation in approximately 40 states requires specific instructional methods and/or type and frequency of support for struggling readers. Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act requires districts to provide intensive reading instruction and support for struggling students ([Bellwether](#)).
- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act added literacy coaches to the state's lowest-performing schools ([Bellwether](#)).
- Tennessee's *Tennessee Literacy Success Act* (2021) requires the use of a reading screener to identify reading challenges prior to completing grade 3 ([Bellwether](#)).
- Georgia's *Georgia Early Literacy Act* (2023) requires the use of a reading screener for students in grades K-3 and the development of individual reading plans for struggling students ([Bellwether](#)).
- Connecticut's *Right to Read* act (2021) requires districts to create interventions for students who are not progressing in their reading development ([Bellwether](#)).
- As of 2024, 39 states and the District of Columbia had adopted mandatory dyslexia screening to identify children for additional support and services as early as possible ([Bellwether](#)).
- Identifying the needs of a range of student populations is just the start; states must also provide support for all students ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- State policy around early reading should maintain a broad scope that encompasses all students - from preschoolers to those beyond the 3rd grade and across all school types, including charter and non-Title I schools ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- State policy should keep a strong focus on progress monitoring through valid and reliable assessments ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- States should maintain legislation that provides support and resources for students with dyslexia ([Shanker Institute](#)).



- Legislators should support inclusive, explicit and systematic reading instruction that values students' diverse backgrounds, languages, and knowledge (as seen in the reading instruction resource [Reading Rockets](#)) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Legislators should strive to address students' literacy needs comprehensively by developing a suite of interventions, instead of relying on isolated initiatives (as Michigan is able to do) ([Shanker Institute](#)),
- Lawmakers should strive for equitable support for all students, including students experiencing poverty, English learners or students with dyslexia. Given the persistent and predictable disparities in reading proficiency across racial and ethnic lines, we urge legislators to craft language that deliberately targets the needs of black, brown, and indigenous students (Model state: California) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Through several bills, Michigan has created a set of interventions designed to address the needs of students who may need additional support in reading. Five different support programs have been developed under this legislation: (1) tutoring, (2) summer programs, (3) before- and after-school programs, (4) multi-tiered systems of support and (5) parent involvement and support programs ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Michigan has partnered with the Michigan Education Corps to provide tutoring in pre-K through 3rd grade. The tutors will be trained in a multisensory, sequential, systematic education approach to reading. The impact of the tutoring program will be measured by recording the number of tutors, the number of children tutored and their demographic information, whether interventions are implemented with fidelity, whether children's improvement in math or literacy is consistent with expectations, and the impact of the programs on organizations and stakeholders ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Michigan's Grand Valley State University will work with families and districts to provide services such as after-school education and specialized summer education programming designed to improve reading and literacy using a multisensory approach ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Michigan is adopting a multi-tiered system of supports model to track pre-K to 3rd grade students' progress, aiming for them to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. The multi-tiered system of supports must include (i) team-based leadership, (ii) a tiered delivery system; (iii) selection and implementation of instruction, interventions, and supports; (iv) a comprehensive screening and assessment system; and (v) continuous data-based decision making ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Michigan's state-funded preschool program, The Great Start Readiness Program, will partner with local parent coalitions to coordinate home visits for at-risk children and their families. The home visits must be conducted as part of a locally coordinated, family-centered, data-driven strategic plan. One of the goals of the home visits is to improve school readiness using evidence-based methods, including a focus on developmentally appropriate outcomes for early literacy so that children have the reading proficiency they need to succeed in 4th grade and beyond ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- State legislation should include language on reading plans, which are separate from Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and may call for a wide variety of supports such as supplemental instructional services, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), notifications to parents, or recommendations to other specialists for further diagnosis and services. AL HB 388, for example, calls for teachers or other school personnel to develop an individual reading improvement plan "no later than 30 days after the identification of the reading deficiency." Promotion to the 4th grade "with a good cause exemption" is contingent on the child continuing to receive intensive reading support ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Tennessee's policy on High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring: Across the state, students who are struggling with reading proficiently are provided with tutoring in small groups (teacher-student ratios of 1:3 or 1:4), for at least 30-minute sessions, multiple times per week. This frequent low-ratio tutoring is a key state strategy and one pathway for promotion to fourth grade for students who did not score proficient on their third-grade ELA assessment ([SCORE Tennessee Policy Pillars](#)).

# Childhood Experiences and Neighborhood Conditions

Children who grow up in literacy-focused, resource-rich neighborhoods experience healthy development and cultivate a lifelong joy for reading.



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**Do families live in well-resourced neighborhoods (including well-resourced and accessible libraries)?**

## Why it matters



Neighborhoods play a central role in supporting families' stability and well-being, their access to social and economic opportunities, and their children's chances to thrive and succeed. Neighborhoods are where children experience critical stages of socio-emotional and physical development, where social ties form, and where people access resources and life opportunities. The ability to find and afford quality housing, to feel welcomed and respected in one's community and social circles, and to have equitable access to local resources all reflect essential aspects of an inclusive neighborhood ([Urban Institute](#)).

Students and families in neighborhoods experiencing poverty have limited access to resources and opportunities that promote economic mobility. The size of the middle class in an area is associated with levels of upward mobility. Moving to a lower-poverty area before age 13 improves the likelihood of students eventually attending college and earning more as adults. Economic segregation varies by race, with a higher percentage of Black and Latine people experiencing poverty living in low-income communities compared to white people from similar economic backgrounds ([Education-to-](#)

## [Workforce Framework](#)

Access to affordable housing: A lack of affordable housing leads to material hardships like reduced access to food, clothing, medicine and transportation, while also negatively impacting mental and physical health, such as increased depression among tenants behind on rent and developmental delays in children living in poor housing conditions. This issue is also linked to higher eviction rates, disproportionately affecting families experiencing poverty, women and people of color ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Families experiencing poverty are more likely than middle-income families to live in substandard housing, which is associated with exposure to lead paint, asbestos, mold, roaches and rodents. These conditions can affect children's cognitive functioning and behavior, and can increase the incidence of asthma, which can cause school absences ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)). Families experiencing poverty also are more likely than middle-income families to move frequently, often causing their children to change schools mid-year. Students who have changed schools two or more times in the previous year are half as likely as their stable peers to read well, and third graders who changed schools frequently are 2.5 times more likely to repeat a grade ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

Access to libraries: Access to libraries provides valuable educational and community resources, particularly in low-income areas where residents may have limited access to books, technology and quiet study spaces. Libraries support literacy development and lifelong learning by offering free reading materials, internet access and educational programs ([Neuman & Celano, 2012](#)). Their location within a reasonable walking distance or along accessible transit routes increases their use, especially for families without at-home learning resources. Libraries serve as important community hubs that support education, job readiness and civic engagement ([Kranich, 2013](#)). Ensuring that libraries are well-placed and well-funded helps provide equitable access to information and learning opportunities.

Well-resourced neighborhoods and family well-

being: A well-resourced neighborhood, in contrast, has affordable housing in safe communities, diversity of income and demographics, access to technology, transportation and other resources that help families thrive. Affordable, stable and safe housing is foundational to individual and family well-being. Children who grow up in safe and stable housing are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn, succeed in elementary and middle school and graduate from high school. Adults living in stable housing are more likely to complete postsecondary training and obtain and keep high-quality employment. And individuals with lower incomes living in mixed-income neighborhoods tend to experience better outcomes at all life stages ([Results for America](#)).

Environmental quality: Good and stable health helps people of all ages surmount life's challenges, excel in school and on the job, ensure their families' well-being, and fully participate in their communities. Environmental quality reduces people's risk of health complications that may undermine school or work performance. Access to and usage of health services can help parents ensure that their children receive basic care through critical formative years and enable adults to obtain the tests needed to screen for early detection of diseases, enhancing the likelihood of effective treatment ([Urban Institute](#)).

Political participation and representation: Governance that is attentive to the needs of all community members and residents who are deeply engaged in collective decision making are hallmarks of a community that supports upward mobility. A responsive local government empowers the people it serves by ensuring their concerns are addressed. By allocating resources equitably, local governments can help ensure all residents have good prospects for economic success. And when public institutions that are intended to serve and protect communities act with justice and restraint, residents feel that they are valued and respected members of the community ([Urban Institute](#)).



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of residential units that are unoccupied, or vacant, in a given year, disaggregated by rentals and homeownership ([US Census Bureau](#)).
- Average age of housing stock, which helps communities isolate potential issues, like exposure to asbestos and/or lead paint and connect people to resources ([US Census Bureau](#), [American Community Survey](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 living in crowded households ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Number of times a student changes schools between kindergarten and fourth grade ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Number of children enrolled in grades K-3 who experience homelessness or are doubled up with family members or friends ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Number of children under age 6 receiving emergency housing services ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Student mobility rate ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).
- Students experiencing housing instability and changing schools as a result (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Number of students experiencing housing instability that requires changing schools ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Number of students who experience homelessness during the school year ([StriveTogether 2021](#) and [Urban Institute](#)).
- Ratio of affordable and available housing units to households with low, very low, and extremely low income levels. Families and individuals need the security and stability of a decent house or apartment they can afford, where family budgets are not stretched too thin to pay for other basic needs like nutritious food, health care, and educational opportunities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Number and share of public school children who are ever homeless during the school year. Housing instability and homelessness represent extreme manifestations of powerlessness and the loss of dignity and belonging, disrupting family stability and undermining both physical and emotional health ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Ratio of (1) the number of affordable housing units to (2) the number of households with low and very low incomes in an area (city or county). Housing units are defined as affordable if the monthly costs do not exceed 30 percent of a household's income. Households with low incomes are defined as those earning below 80 percent of area median income (AMI), and very low-income households are defined as those earning below 50 percent of AMI ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of eligible households receiving federal rental assistance ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of families with children under age 6 paying more than 30% of their income for housing (rent or mortgage plus heat and utilities) ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#) and [StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percent of household income spent on rent ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Number of affordable and available housing units per 100 households with low, very low, and extremely low incomes. This metric reflects the extent of housing options for households with low incomes. Housing is considered affordable when monthly costs fall at or below 30 percent of a household's income ([Urban Institute](#)).



- Location affordability index ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Eviction rate ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Environmental racism, as measured by air quality index ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Environmental racism, as measured by environmental health hazards ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Level of public investment in neighborhoods as measured through programs like Opportunity Zones, Community Development Blocks and tax credits ([StriveTogether](#)).
- Share of people experiencing poverty who live in high-poverty neighborhoods. A high-poverty neighborhood is where more than 40% of residents are experiencing poverty. This metric reflects the extent of economic segregation in a community ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Invest in safe, affordable housing ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Balancing resident needs with inspector capacity ([Results for America](#)).
- Healthy home environment assessments: Professional home inspections evaluating environmental health risks ([Results for America](#)).
- Proactive inspections to help maintain safe and healthy housing. The foundation of many effective programs is a more strategic deployment of a jurisdiction's home inspection capacity. Oftentimes, this includes using data analysis to identify high-risk blocks or neighborhoods and then sending inspectors to walk those areas, conduct visual exterior assessments, speak to residents and schedule proactive inspections ([Results for America](#)).
- Raising tenant and landlord awareness about maintaining safe and healthy housing. Many successful programs include a robust education component — often run by inspectors — to help landlords and tenants identify home hazards and other threats to home safety. This can include written materials, videos and public workshops (for instance, walking through a home to demonstrate an inspection). Such efforts also often include information on how to request a home inspection ([Results for America](#)).
- Guided play through playscapes, like Play on Purpose sites that encourage children and adults to engage in “guided play” ([Results for America](#)).

### Policies

- Housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs: Funding in the form of loans and/or grants to income-eligible owner-occupants to assist with repair, rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of homes ([Results for America](#)).
- To ensure property owners have the financial capacity to address home hazards, some programs provide income-eligible property owners with grants and/or loans to assist with repair, rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of homes. Funding is often tied to specific forms of home improvement, such as insulation, plumbing or mold removal ([Results for America](#)).
- Lead paint abatement programs: Programs focused on removing lead-based and contaminated surfaces from homes and other buildings ([Results for America](#)).
- Percentage of eligible households receiving federal rental assistance ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Ratio of the number of affordable housing units to the number of households with low and very low incomes in an area (by city or county). Housing units are defined as affordable if the monthly costs do not exceed 30% of a household's income. Households with low incomes are defined as those earning below 80% of area median income (AMI), and very low-income households are defined as those earning below 50 percent of AMI ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Adopting rent regulation, eviction prevention, just-cause eviction and right-to-counsel policies

- to protect tenants ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Balancing community development with creating opportunities for residents with low incomes to move to more resource-rich communities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating affordable homeownership opportunities, including by providing down payment or closing-cost assistance and expanding access to financing, such as through the use of subsidized or shared appreciation ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating more dedicated affordable housing, including by subsidizing affordable housing development, establishing incentives for developers to create affordable units (e.g., density bonuses) and exploring ways to build affordable housing on publicly-owned land ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Enacting foreclosure prevention, property tax relief and rehabilitation assistance programs to assist homeowners ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Enforcing fair housing laws ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Increasing the overall housing supply, including by reforming zoning and land-use policies, streamlining permitting processes and creating incentives for developers to build new housing ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Preserving subsidized and unsubsidized affordable rental housing ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Providing rental assistance to residents and incentivizing landlords to rent to tenants receiving assistance ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reforming property taxes and property assessment processes to ensure that they do not disproportionately burden residents with low incomes ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Supporting community development in high-poverty neighborhoods, including by addressing vacancy and blight; and investing in schools, transportation and job creation ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Supporting permanently affordable housing models, such as community land trusts ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Access to technology

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals who have both (1) access to at least one desktop or laptop computer owned by someone in the home and (2) reliable broadband Internet ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Number and percent of students who have school and home access to broadband internet and a connected computing device ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Access to internet and computer/devices and technical support ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of the community that has access to a desktop or laptop, a smartphone, a tablet or another computer (Data source: American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of households that have broadband internet subscriptions (Data source: American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Residential fixed broadband deployment (Data source: Federal Communications Commission) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of individuals who have both (1) access to at least one desktop or laptop computer owned by someone in the home and (2) reliable broadband internet ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Share of households with a computer and broadband internet subscription in the home.

This metric reflects a community's digital divide by measuring in-home access to a computer and the internet, including DSL, cable modem, cellular data and fiber connections. Without reliable access to online resources, young people and adults are locked out of opportunities to learn, build skills, and gain the credentials they need to advance economically ([Urban Institute](#)).

- State has a broadband task force/commission to promote broadband access ([National Council of State Legislatures](#)).

broadband internet access, including by providing direct cash transfers or subsidies for the costs of broadband service and devices, such as laptops, tablets and phones ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Addressing physical barriers to home broadband internet access, such as the lack of appropriate infrastructure or wiring ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating free, public options for accessing the internet, including by providing Wi-Fi in public, accessible spaces like libraries ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Providing digital literacy training for residents, particularly underserved residents, to close the digital divide ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Technology to support learning and assessment in the classroom and online ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Local and state coalitions who advocate for access to broadband with city and state officials and by partnering with telecommunications companies ([National Council of State Legislatures](#)).
- Addressing financial barriers to home

### Policies

- State subsidizes broadband subscriptions for families with limited incomes ([FCC](#)).<sup>1</sup>
- Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Offers broadband infrastructure and digital equity grants ([Connected Nation](#)).
- [Smart Cities](#) policies and resources

## Access to transportation

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Average commute time to work, school, or college as reported in the American Community Survey ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- The Low Transportation Cost Index, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which estimates the average transportation cost for a three-person, single-parent family earning 50 percent of the median income for renters in a region ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Distance to school and average student travel time ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework, 2017](#)).
- Average commute time to work, school or college ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Average travel time to school (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Average travel time to work (Data sources: Center for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of workers who commute by walking and by biking (Data sources: Center

<sup>1</sup>Federal funding for this program has ended but we chose to include it so that communities see what federal programs can look like.

for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).

- Trips made to work by mass transit (Data sources: Center for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Access to mass transit departure and arrival points ([Measuring Accessibility](#)).
- Share of income spent on transportation. This metric reflects how much households spend on both public transit and cars ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Transit trips index. This metric reflects a community's access to public transportation. It is percentile-ranked nationally based on the number of public transit trips taken annually by an average household earning 80% of the area median income ([Urban Institute](#)).
- The Low Transportation Cost Index, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Transit trips index and transportation cost index. Without accessible transportation options, families may be unable to take advantage of opportunities for work and education, or they may have to trade expensive commutes for other needs and goods ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Complete Streets approach to ensure the design of streets balance the needs of different modes of transportation, support local land uses, economies, cultures and natural

environments ([Smart Growth America](#)).

### Policies

- Complete Streets policies ([Smart Growth America](#)).
- Availability of public transportation subsidies for students (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Affordable housing within walking distance from public transportation (Data source: Center for Neighborhood Technology) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Transit connectivity index (Data source: Center for Neighborhood Technology) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Encouraging housing development near transit, including affordable housing and housing for people with disabilities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Expanding transportation options, including public transportation, such as buses and light rails, and active transportation, such as bike lanes and sidewalks ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving the quality and frequency of public transportation ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving transportation accessibility for people with mobility challenges, including by creating paratransit systems and ensuring existing transit is accessible to people with disabilities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reducing barriers to using public transportation, including by providing fare subsidies, making systems easy to navigate (e.g., having clear signage and route maps in multiple languages), and centralizing fares across different modes of transportation ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Exposure to neighborhood crime

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Number and percentage of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school, as measured by a school climate survey

([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).

- Proportion of children with a parent or guardian who has served time in jail (Data source: Health Resources and Services Administration) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).



## Systems indicators

- Rates of reported violent crime and property crime. Exposure to crime, even if one is not a direct victim, can contribute to stress, depression, and anxiety in youth and adults, and teens who are exposed to high levels of violent crime are more likely to engage in criminal activity themselves. (Data source: Federal Bureau of Investigation) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)) ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Rate of juvenile arrests by city or county (number of arrests per 100,000 residents) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Rate of juvenile justice arrests (Data source: Federal Bureau of Investigation) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Rate of violent felonies and property felonies by city or county (number of incidents per 100,000 residents) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Creating reentry supports for those recently released from jail or prison ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Implementing restorative justice approaches, which can help reduce recidivism ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving neighborhoods by redeveloping vacant or abandoned properties, installing street lighting and supporting community development activities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving residents' financial security, including by strengthening the social safety net and reducing obstacles to accessing public benefits ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Preventing gun violence by limiting access to firearms and raising awareness of gun safety best practices ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Promoting community-led violence prevention initiatives, which identify residents at highest risk and intervene before conflict occurs ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Shifting toward evidence-based policing, in partnership with communities ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Neighborhood economic diversity

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of city or county residents experiencing poverty who live in a high-poverty neighborhood (defined as a neighborhood in which more than 40 percent of residents experience poverty) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 6 living in neighborhoods in which more than 20% of the population lives in poverty ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- poverty) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of families who have lived in poverty for two generations or more ([Brookings Institute](#)).
- Share of residents experiencing poverty who live in high-poverty neighborhoods. Economic segregation excludes families with low incomes from well-resourced and opportunity-rich neighborhoods, undermines their sense of belonging, and creates neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and distress, which damage their children's long-term prospects ([Urban Institute](#)).

Key source: *E-W Framework*

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of city or county residents experiencing poverty who live in a high-poverty neighborhood (defined as a neighborhood in which more than 40% of residents experience



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Rate of juvenile arrests by city or county (number of arrests per 100,000 residents) ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Examining juvenile arrest rates by type of offense (for example, drug abuse violation, curfew and loitering, disorderly conduct, etc.)

can also help data users better understand community dynamics and inequities in policing ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).

- Examine data on post-arrest handling of juvenile cases (For example, users could examine whether youth are referred to juvenile court after arrest or diverted from formal court processing ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).
- ImpactTulsa partnered with Tulsa Public Schools to build a data visualization tool for exploring how environmental conditions vary across neighborhoods and their relationships to academic outcomes ([Education-to-Workforce](#)).



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Neighborhood exposure index, or share of a person's neighbors who are people of other races and ethnicities (Data source: American Community Survey) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of an individual's neighbors who are members of other racial or ethnic groups, calculated as a Neighborhood Exposure Index ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Proportion of community residents who are immigrants (Data source: National Equity Atlas) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Ratio of the share of local elected officials of a racial or ethnic group to the share of residents of the same racial or ethnic group (Data sources: American Community Survey; local elections data) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Share of the voting-eligible population who are registered to vote and share who turn out to vote (Data source: Census) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).

- Index of people's exposure to neighbors of different races and ethnicities. Racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods are hallmarks of inclusive communities. This metric calculates separately for each racial or ethnic group the average share of that group's neighbors who are members of other racial or ethnic groups ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Policies

### Policies

- Narrowing racial homeownership gaps, including by creating affordable homeownership opportunities for households of color ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reducing housing discrimination in the private market, including by enacting source-of-income laws and funding fair housing organizations ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reforming zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Access to reading materials (e.g., easily accessible libraries)

### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- Libraries deploy creative means, including mobile and outdoor libraries, packhorse rural delivery, literacy training and reading to the blind to ensure everyone in the community is served ([Kranich, 2012](#)).
- Libraries offer engaging experiences that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society ([Kranich, 2012](#)).
- Libraries develop programs to serve as community hubs, fostering civic engagement, cultural enrichment, and economic growth ([Kranich, 2012](#)).

#### Policies

- Recognizing the lack of progress in literacy for historically underserved students, Colorado has created a set of guidelines that support children from the start. Among its features, the law provides funding for Dolly Parton's Imagination

Library Program to work with community partners in a book distribution effort designed to inspire a love of reading by giving books to children every month, starting from birth and continuing to age 5 ([Shanker Institute](#)).

- The presiding state librarian in Colorado's Department of Education plays an important role according to the law. They will support efforts to provide access to books in Colorado's rural areas and to establish a detailed plan with local nonprofit organizations to provide greater access to age-appropriate, high-quality books each month. Other specific duties include managing the daily operations of the program, and developing, promoting and coordinating a public awareness campaign ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Finally, Colorado's law requires examining the success of the program. Yearly reports to the Department of Education and the education committees of the legislature are required to determine the total number of eligible children who will continue to be served by the program ([Shanker Institute](#)).

## Environmental quality

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Air quality. Carcinogenic, respiratory and neurological toxins in the air can harm people's health. A higher value for this metric indicates better air quality and lower exposure to toxins ([Urban Institute](#)).

### Policies

#### Policies

- Addressing home health hazards, such as lead paint and pipes, to foster safe and healthy

home environments ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Developing parks and other green spaces to absorb carbon and improve air quality ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving the quality and frequency of public transportation and encouraging housing development near transit to reduce reliance on personal vehicles ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Incentivizing private-sector actors to reduce their carbon footprints, including by leveraging government procurement and contracting procedures ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Investing in green infrastructure, such as permeable pavements, that can help mitigate

exposure to environmental stressors like extreme heat ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Reducing the carbon footprint of all public-sector operations, including by transitioning

to clean energy sources, electrifying bus and vehicle fleets, retrofitting city-owned buildings and implementing other energy efficiency measures ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Just policing

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Juvenile arrests per 100,000 juveniles. High number of arrests among young people, ages 10 to 17, is a strong indicator of elevated criminal legal system involvement and over policing. This metric includes arrests for any crime or status offense ([Urban Institute](#)).

#### Policies

- Creating community responder or co-responder programs for nonviolent emergencies, such as mental health or behavioral crises, domestic disputes, traffic safety issues and homelessness ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating diversion programs and other alternatives to arrest, trial and incarceration ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving police officer recruitment, retention

and training, as well as addressing officer wellness ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Minimizing the use of over-policing strategies, including stop-and-frisk, pretextual and non-safety-related traffic stops and “broken windows” policing ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Shifting funding from police departments to other local agencies where appropriate, such as funding programs in schools to address truancy instead of relying on police officers to enforce truancy laws ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Shifting toward evidence-based policing, in partnership with communities ([Urban Institute](#)).

Supporting greater police accountability, including by publishing data on police misconduct and use of force, advocating for the reform of qualified immunity and creating civilian oversight boards that operate independently of law enforcement agencies ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Political participation and representation

### Indicators

#### Systems indicators

- Ratio of the share of local, elected officials of a racial or ethnic group to the share of residents of the same group. Political scientists commonly use this metric to capture the extent to which racial and ethnic groups are represented by their community’s elected leaders ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Share of the voting-age population who turns out to vote. Voter turnout is a well-established

and broadly available reflection of political engagement in a community ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Number of membership associations per 10,000 people and ratio of Facebook friends with higher socioeconomic status to Facebook friends with lower socioeconomic status. Social networks help connect people across lines of income, education, and identity, enabling them to share information and other resources that support well-being, connect to opportunities for advancement, and strengthen feelings of belonging ([Urban Institute](#)).



# Policies

## Policies

- Adopting direct democracy practices, such as participatory budgeting, to empower community members and encourage them to participate in local governance ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating public financing systems for local elections ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reducing barriers to voting, including by automatically registering voters, expanding the number of voting sites and their voting hours and offering additional options, such as mail-in, early and absentee voting ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated people ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Scheduling local elections to coincide with state or national elections, which can lead to a more representative electorate ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Scheduling local elections to coincide with state or national elections ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Strengthening and diversifying the local government workforce, including by investing in hiring, recruitment, training and compensation ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Strengthening civics education courses in schools ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Supporting labor unions and the right to organize ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Switching from at-large to district elections, adopting proportional representation systems and moving to choice voting or cumulative voting systems to make local governments more representative of their constituents ([Urban Institute](#)).



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## Do families with children have access to adequate public support?

## Why it matters



Public support for families is essential to ensuring that all children have the foundation they need to thrive. From birth weight and maternal education to access to health care, food security and economic stability, the conditions in which children grow up profoundly impact their ability to learn and succeed. Adverse childhood experiences, untreated health conditions, and poverty-related stressors create barriers to academic achievement and long-term well-being. Investing in comprehensive public policies and supports that

address these challenges — such as quality health care, economic security and access to nutritious food — can help break cycles of disadvantage and promote equitable opportunities for all families.

### Childhood experiences:

*Birth weight:* Babies with low weight at birth are at greater risk than average-weight babies for neurodevelopmental problems (e.g., cerebral palsy, blindness and other cognitive disabilities), behavioral problems and attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder — all of which can interfere with learning and school success ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

*Parent's education level:* Newborns whose mothers have low levels of education are more likely than newborns of mothers who have higher levels of education to have been exposed to cigarette smoke, alcohol, drugs and folic acid deficiencies, which can cause preterm birth, intrauterine growth delay and long-lasting effects on the child's cognition and behavior ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

*Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)* are potentially traumatic events, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse; physical and emotional neglect; domestic violence; and growing up in a family where there is mental illness, substance misuse, parental separation or divorce, or an incarcerated household member. Excessive trauma and stress during early childhood “disrupt[s] neurodevelopment and can have lasting effects on brain structure and function” ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

*Food security:* Malnourished children have impaired cognitive development, long-term emotional and health problems, decreased educational attainment and decreased productivity. Although children experiencing poverty qualify for free or reduced-price breakfast at school, 10 million eligible kids don't get any, either because of the stigma attached to receiving help or because turbulence in their lives keeps them from getting to school on time ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

*Health care access and insurance coverage:* Children experiencing poverty receive less, and lower-quality, medical care — and fare less well as a result — than wealthier children who have the same health problems ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)). Children experiencing poverty have a higher incidence of health problems that interfere with learning, such as chronic asthma, poor hearing, vision and dental problems, ADHD, frequent headaches, heart conditions, kidney disease, epilepsy, digestive problems and cognitive delays ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

*Healthy vision and hearing:* Research shows us how prevalent vision and hearing problems are among young children in the U.S., especially those experiencing poverty, and explains how these impairments can lead to emotional and behavioral problems that interfere with learning and to excessive absence from school. Untreated vision problems can produce symptoms similar to ADHD, causing some children with vision problems to be misidentified as having a learning disorder, according to the American Optometric Association. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, hearing loss “causes delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills (speech and language); the language deficit causes learning problems that result in reduced academic achievement” ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

Educators know all too well how students' health conditions can disrupt teaching and interrupt learning. Children who can't see well enough to make out words written at the front of the classroom, can't hear well enough to understand what the teacher is saying and can't forget their tooth pain or hunger long enough to concentrate have a hard time learning in school. Children with asthma will struggle to keep up if frequent attacks keep them out of school. And trauma or stress make meaningful classroom engagement difficult for some children and almost impossible for others ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

*Economic stability:* Jobs and wages constitute the primary source of income and economic security for most people in the U.S. today. Steady work enables people to gain skills and experience so they can advance to higher-paying jobs, building both income and wealth to support their families and boost their children's future prospects. Work can contribute to one's sense of personal autonomy and power and provide feelings of accomplishment and dignity. Reliable income and sufficient savings enable people to better weather life's inevitable challenges and disruptions and to provide a stable and supportive home for their children ([Urban Institute](#)).



# Indicators

## Contributing indicators

- Percent of live births weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds). Babies born less than 5.5 pounds are more likely to experience developmental problems than are babies born at higher birthweights. (Data source: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Report.) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Percent of low birth weight babies among women at the lowest income level ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of low birth weight babies among women at the highest income level ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Children who are born healthy ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Children from birth to age 6 in out-of-home placement (foster care) that had no more than two placements in a 24-month period ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Children who are healthy, thriving, and developing on track (no untreated health conditions or avoidable developmental delays), from birth through third grade and beyond ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Children enrolled in multiple elementary schools ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Percentage of children ages 3 to 5 who were read to by a family member every day in the past week ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of infants and toddlers (ages 4 months to 35 months) who were read to by their caregivers every day in the last week ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Number and percentage of caregivers that read to or encourage their children to read three or more times a week (from birth to age 5) or who reported their child read to themselves three or more times a week (kindergarten through eighth grade) ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 not nurtured daily ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 not read to daily ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of kindergartners with parents considered at risk for depression ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of mothers experiencing depression (of all mothers with young children) ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 whose mother reports fair/poor mental health ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 whose parent reports they are not coping very well ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 3 whose parent lacks parenting support ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Children from birth to age 3 with substantiated cases of abuse and neglect referred to Part C Early Intervention (based on CAPTA) ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Maltreatment rate per 1,000 children under age 3 ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Physical, sexual and emotional abuse in childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Emotional and physical neglect in childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Children living with a family member with mental health or substance use disorders ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Witnessing domestic violence in childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Sudden separation from a loved one in childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Childhood poverty ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Racism and discrimination in childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).

- Violence in the community during childhood ([Head Start ECLKC](#)).
- Percentage of individuals with fewer than three Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Reduced exposure of children to adverse childhood experiences ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Children in households where the household head has graduated high school. (Note: Those who have a GED or equivalent are included as high school graduates.) (Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Communities Survey.) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Number of U.S. children living in poverty with asthma ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Number of U.S. children between ages 1 and 5 with lead poisoning ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 6 with blood lead levels at or above 10 micrograms per deciliter ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Reducing the impact of early childhood experiences renews children’s capacity for learning ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Lead paint inspection and abatement ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Lena Early Talk “Pedometer”: A tech-enabled device that measures the quality of interactions between children and adults to deepen early language exposure and development ([LENA](#)).

## Policies

- Creating programs to educate parents and families on children’s health, development and care needs ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating targeted supports for vulnerable groups, including children and young people — particularly those in foster care and those returning from juvenile detention — and survivors of domestic or intimate partner violence ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Fostering positive learning environments for students, including by developing programs that prevent bullying, moving away from punitive disciplinary practices and applying other trauma-informed practices ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Improving traffic safety by implementing calming measures, building complete streets and creating safer environments for pedestrians and bicyclists ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Increasing access to mental health services, including substance use treatment and prevention ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Preventing gun violence by limiting access to firearms, keeping guns out of schools and raising awareness of gun safety best practices ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Strengthening workplace safety regulations and creating paid sick leave and predictable scheduling laws to enhance worker well-being ([Urban Institute](#)).
- The First 1,000 Days on Medicaid: A program under NYC’s Medicaid Redesign effort that aims to improve the physical, social and emotional needs of children and their families ([NYC Department of Health](#)). *Key source: E-W Framework*

## Systems indicators

- Rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect among children from birth to age 6 ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Deaths caused by injury per 100,000 people. These deaths both reflect and cause trauma in a community. They include planned deaths (e.g., homicides or suicides) and unplanned deaths (e.g., from motor vehicle and other accidents) ([Urban Institute](#)).

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Direct funding to programs addressing adverse early experiences and sources of toxic stress ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Expand access to voluntary, effective home visiting programs and services for new and expectant parents that model relationship building, engage parents in their child’s learning, and refer for additional supports as needed ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).





## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of eligible individuals participating in SNAP ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of individuals living in a census tract with low access to healthy food, as defined by the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Number of food-insecure children in the U.S. ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Number of children who receive free lunch during the summer ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percentage of eligible units with children under age 18 not receiving SNAP ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of households reporting child food insecurity ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Number and percent of children who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily ([Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education](#)).
- Percentage of eligible individuals receiving WIC benefits ([U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)).
- Percentage of eligible units with children under age 18 not receiving SNAP (Desired outcome: Families have access to necessary services through expanded eligibility, reduced administrative burden or programs to identify needs and connect families with services) ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Percentage of individuals living in a census tract with low access to healthy food, as defined by the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Proportion of eligible students participating in the School Breakfast Program (Data source: U.S. Department of Agriculture) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Proportion of households experiencing food insecurity (Data sources: Census, Child Protective Services) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Support health and affordable food options in high-poverty neighborhoods ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Increase participation of families, child care providers, schools, and communities in federal nutrition programs ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Summer food programs keep kids healthy when school is out ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Breakfast at school improves attendance and learning ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Reduced Administrative Burden for SNAP ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).

### Policies

- States expand access to WIC benefits (e.g., increasing income threshold, extending benefits for postpartum people).
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Allows educational programs in eligible low-income areas to serve a free meal and/or snack to students 18 and younger ([No Kid Hungry](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of eligible individuals participating in SNAP ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals with health insurance ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of eligible individuals (children or adults) enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Fewer children starting school with undetected, undiagnosed and untreated physical ailments ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Fewer children starting school with developmental delays and disabilities ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Fewer children starting school with social-emotional and behavioral challenges ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Fewer children starting school with oral, vision and hearing impairments ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of uninsured U.S. children overall and percent of uninsured U.S. children who are living in poverty ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of children nationally without a medical home. A medical home is a health care setting that patients visit regularly for their primary care needs, building familiarity and consistency with care providers ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of children receiving universal developmental screening at children's 9-, 18- and 24- or 30-month well child visits and any other time the family or clinician has concerns, per the AAP and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation ([Campaign](#)

[for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

- Percent of U.S. children aged 2 - 8 years with at least one mental, behavioral or developmental disability ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Proportion of low-income children at high risk of developmental delays ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Percent of children who have had cavities by age 5 ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

### Systems Indicators

- Ratio of population per primary care physician. Access to health services is essential to both preventive care and treatment of health conditions, enabling people to enjoy the good health that facilitates success in school, work, and social relationships ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Share of low-weight births. Starting out life in fragile health undermines a child's prospects for longer-term health, educational attainment, and economic success, and caring for a child with chronically poor health may also limit parents' work and earnings ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Air quality index. Environmental hazards expose people to health risks that threaten their quality of life and may undermine school and work performance ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Deaths due to injury per 100,000 people. Exposure to trauma affects children's brain and socioemotional development; undermines people's feelings of connection, agency, and self-efficacy; and interferes with capacities for school and work success ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Expand outreach to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral, and mental health

insurance coverage for children and parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Simplify enrollment to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral, and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Eliminate barriers to retention to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral, and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Address health care shortages —both of providers who accept Medicaid/CHIP, and of providers who offer specialized care (e.g., dental care, mental health, developmental specialists) ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Promote timely use of prenatal and pediatric health care ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Require universal newborn screening for hearing and metabolic disorders, and vision screening between ages one and five ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Screen for developmental disabilities and delays according to the schedule recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Increase access to comprehensive health (medical) homes that identify and respond to the physical, social, and emotional determinants of health ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Prioritize funding for prevention programs, including those delivered outside of traditional medical settings ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Implement health care data systems to track and improve referral and follow-up services ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Maximize screening, diagnosis and treatment of maternal depression and early childhood behavioral health issues using new opportunities under the Affordable Care Act ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Improve coordination between IDEA Part B and C, primary care, and public health programs

([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Access to high-quality, affordable, comprehensive health care (including preventative, acute, emergency, and chronic care) for physical, mental, and oral health for all families with infants and young children ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Establishment of medical homes and primary care practices that focus broadly on children's healthy development, building on exemplary programs such as Help Me Grow and Reach Out and Read, and drawing from Bright Futures ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Communities need a way to identify when children have health risks that will jeopardize their school success, sound the alarm and marshal the attention, support and action required to get them back on track. Developmental surveillance and screening, behavioral assessments and follow-up constitute the frontlines of an early warning and response system for the health determinants of early school success ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Physical activity helps children pay attention and learn ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Managing children's asthma helps them reduce absences ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Regular oral health care prevents lost learning time ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Screenings catch developmental, hearing, vision and lead problems before they interfere with learning ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Prenatal care supports early brain development ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Social and emotional development builds curiosity and supports learning ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).

## Policies

- Expanding Medicaid, under the Affordable Care Act, eligibility significantly increases access to healthcare for low-income families and children.

States that expanded Medicaid have seen higher rates of insured children, better access to preventive care, and improved health outcomes. States like New Mexico and Oregon have seen significant declines in uninsured rates after expansion ([Centennial Care Medicaid](#); [Oregon Health Plan](#)).

- In July 2024, the New York State Department of Health submitted an 1115 Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Upon approval, this amendment allows the state to offer continuous eligibility to children under six in Medicaid and CHPlus, aiming to prevent coverage gaps and improve health equity ([New York State Department of Health](#)).
- Expanding School Based Health Centers allows students to access medical, dental, and mental health services in schools. Medicaid reimbursement for SBHC services ensures financial sustainability. Colorado and Maryland use Medicaid billing to fund SBHCs, improving student health and attendance ([Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#); [Maryland Public Schools](#)).
- California, Illinois, and Washington offer coverage to all children, including undocumented minors, extending Medicaid/CHIP-like coverage to all children, regardless of immigration status ([California Budget and Policy Center](#); [Illinois Department of Human Services](#); [Washington State Health Care Authority](#)).
- Continuous eligibility policies for Medicaid and CHIP benefits ensures children maintain Medicaid/CHIP coverage for 12 months, even if family income fluctuates.
- Streamlining Medicaid/CHIP enrollment through automatic data matching with other public programs (e.g., SNAP). Reduces paperwork and administrative barriers for families. Louisiana uses data-driven auto-enrollment to increase child health coverage rates ([Louisiana Department of Health](#)).
- Universal child health insurance. In 1998, an Institute of Medicine committee found that “insurance coverage is the major determinant of whether children have access to health care,” and that uninsured children are “most likely to be sick as newborns, less likely to be immunized as preschoolers, less likely to receive medical treatment when they are injured, and less likely to receive treatment for illnesses such as acute or recurrent ear infections, asthma, and tooth decay.” Other studies have verified that after enrolling in the Children’s Health Insurance Program, children’s unmet health needs fall by 50 percent or more and their routine health, dental and asthma care improves in terms of both access and quality. Despite gains made under the Affordable Care Act, however, the United States is still far from ensuring that all children have health insurance ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Ensure a medical home for every child. A medical home is a health care setting that patients visit regularly for their primary care needs, building familiarity and consistency with care providers. Care typically is provided by a team of practitioners including physicians, medical assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners and care coordinators. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) defines a medical home for infants and children as having well-trained primary care physicians who are known to the child and family, able to develop “a partnership of mutual responsibility and trust,” and able to help manage and facilitate all aspects of pediatric care. Medical homes are especially important for medically underserved children, who often have more “chronic conditions and economic, geographic, and psychosocial factors” that combine to aggravate medical problems ([Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)).
- Medi-Cal status: California’s Medicare health care program ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).



# Family economic stability

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Children in low-income families (income below 200% of poverty level). (Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
  - Percentage of children under age 3 without any full-time working parent ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
  - Proportion of K-12 socioeconomically disadvantaged students ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
  - Percentage of children under age 3 in poverty ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
  - Children from birth to age 6 living in families with income below the poverty threshold (Project THRIVE, The National Center for Children in Poverty, [Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
  - Children from birth to age 6 living in extreme poverty (i.e., family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty level) ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- and [Urban Institute](#)).
- Household income and incarceration for children from low-income households ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
  - Income segregation and intergenerational mobility across colleges ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
  - Pay on an average job compared with the cost of living. This metric reflects the supply of jobs in a community that pay enough to meet the local cost of a family's basic needs ([Urban Institute](#)).
  - Ratio of the share of total home values owned by a racial or ethnic group to the share of households of the same group. This metric shows the degree of racial and ethnic disparity in housing wealth. The larger the difference between the two values, the greater the inequities ([Urban Institute](#)).
  - Share of adults in the community ages 25 to 54 who are employed. This is a common metric for measuring employment levels among prime-age workers, also known as the employment-to-population ratio ([Urban Institute](#)).
  - Households that have at least \$400 in emergency savings ([The Federal Reserve Bank](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Family income level ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
  - Household income at 20th, 50th and 80th percentiles. This metric captures the financial resources available to low-, middle-, and high-income households and the extent of income inequality in a community. Larger gaps between values for the three income groups indicate greater inequities ([StriveTogether 2021](#) and [Urban Institute](#)).
  - People with overdue debt typically have few assets or negative wealth ([StriveTogether 2021](#)
- Ratio of pay on the average job to the cost of living. Living-wage jobs provide opportunities for work that enable people to meet their families' financial needs, supporting both economic success and feelings of dignity and autonomy. ([Urban Institute](#))
  - Share of households with debt in collections. Opportunities to accumulate even modest savings can help families weather destabilizing events, such as a period of unemployment or an unexpected expense, providing a sense of autonomy and control and supporting family stability. ([Urban Institute](#))

# Practices and policies

## Practices

- Incentivize economic development that brings living-wage jobs into neighborhoods where lack of opportunity brings all of the problems associated with unemployment and concentrated poverty ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Adopt policies that support flexible work schedules for parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Increase access to public benefits and tax credits that provide income or other supports to help families meet basic needs and maintain stable housing and employment ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Support paid family leave and work exemptions that foster nurturing relationships and responsive caregiving, build parental resilience, and provide security for children ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Fair work scheduling ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).

## Policies

- CalWORKS status: California's work opportunity program that provides temporary financial assistance and employment-focused services to families with children who are minors whose income and property are below state maximum limits for their family size ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Child allowance ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Income support programs ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Paid family leave ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Paid sick leave ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- State earned income tax credit ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- State minimum wage ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).
- Two-generation programs for parental employment ([Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)).

- State child tax credits that are fully refundable ([IRS](#)).
- Adopting community wealth-building strategies, such as establishing a public bank, supporting cooperatives and worker-owned businesses, implementing progressive procurement policies and supporting community land trusts and other models of collective ownership ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Establish baby bonds, publicly-funded child trust accounts designed to address racial/ethnic wealth inequality ([Prosperity Now](#)).
- Creating a local living-wage ordinance that requires employers to pay wages higher than the federal minimum wage ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating programs that allow renters to earn equity through their rent payments and share in the long-term appreciation of their homes ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating workforce development programs that support workers in reskilling and upskilling, such as public-sector apprenticeships ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Creating matched savings accounts for residents with low and moderate wealth ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Establishing a local reparations program to make amends for historical harms and address the structural roots of ongoing wealth disparities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Helping families with low and moderate incomes overcome barriers to homeownership, such as by providing down payment assistance ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Helping parents access high-quality and affordable child care ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Helping residents access financial services and build credit safely, including by regulating predatory lending practices, such as payday loans ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Increasing wages for local government workers ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Investing in infrastructure and other amenities (e.g., roads, public transit, parks and schools), which both creates jobs and enhances longer-term employment opportunities for residents ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Investing in baby bonds and other child

development accounts ([Urban Institute](#)).

- Investing in job placement services and supports to help residents find stable jobs, including transitional and reentry support programs ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Leveraging public procurement processes to incentivize employers to pay living wages ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Partnering with large community-serving institutions, such as universities and hospitals, to funnel capital and resources toward improving local communities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Prioritizing job quality in addition to wages, such as by supporting employee-owned businesses, integrating job-quality requirements in local government contracts and recognizing “high road” employers that pay living wages and provide other elements of high-quality jobs, such as paid leave, workplace flexibility and stable scheduling ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Providing local entrepreneurs and small-business owners with the support they need to succeed, including capital and technical assistance ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Providing direct cash transfers to residents, such as through guaranteed income programs or local tax credits ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Providing financial education and counseling services to residents ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Reforming government fines and fees, which disproportionately affect residents with low incomes and wealth ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Strengthening and diversifying the local government workforce, including by investing in recruitment, training and retention ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Strengthening the social safety net and reducing obstacles to accessing public benefits, such as asset limits ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Supporting existing employers, particularly locally-owned businesses, to grow and thrive ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Supporting residents in accessing and completing postsecondary education ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Navigating public services

### Practices

#### Practices

- Reduce barriers to participation in public benefit programs (e.g., TANF, Head Start, child care subsidy, SNAP and WIC, Medicaid/CHIP, and the EITC) with universal on-line applications and aligned eligibility and enrollment policies ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Employ navigators, centralize referral resources, and invest in hub strategies that integrate supports for parents and children in settings where families are ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Connect education and job training opportunities for parents with access to high quality early learning for their children ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Connect learning environments to health and family support networks ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Coordinate income support programs to minimize “cliff effects” that occur when a small increase in wages leads to a substantial decrease in benefits ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Develop a comprehensive, linked data system to inform planning, document progress, and ultimately improve the health, development, learning, and success of children and their parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Centralize and track screening, referral, diagnosis, and treatment ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Support training for parents, service providers, and policymakers to help them accurately interpret and use data ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Invest in networks of parent navigators/promoters to build social capital and connect families to supports ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Ensure programs draw upon the language and culture of families and their communities ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Direct supports to the most vulnerable parents: teen parents, foster parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, parents who have experienced abuse and neglect, and parents of children with special needs ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Promote family support programs that offer activities and materials while creating opportunities for modeling, peer support, and networking among parents ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Change the culture of eligibility determination and case management from a focus on rule compliance, to a focus on adult-, child-, and family outcomes ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Revise eligibility and work requirements for low-income families that disrupt continuity of care for children and work against children's developmental and educational needs ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

## Other family conditions

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Births to teens ages 15-17 per 1,000 girls ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Childhood Migrant Education Program participant ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Foster youth status ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).

#### Systems indicators

- Number of births to teens ages 15-17 per 1,000 girls ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Mothers of children under age 6 who are screened and referred for depression ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Percentage of early care and education programs with multiple strategies to involve and support parents ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).

### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP): Nine-month intensive bilingual program for child development ([Results for America](#)).
- Triple P Spartanburg (Positive Parenting Program): Free services to help develop parenting skills and understanding of child development ([Triple P Spartanburg](#)).
- Hello Family Spartanburg: Parent support and education initiative ([Hello Family Spartanburg](#)).
- ParentCorps: Early childhood, family-centered intervention that takes place in schools and Head Start programs ([Results for America](#)).
- Evidence-based home visiting programs ([Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center](#)).

#### Policies

- Alliance for Early Success: A 50-state strategy to achieve equitable state early childhood policy ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).





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**Do students have a literacy-rich environment and routines at home (e.g., books in the home, children being read to)?**

## Why it matters



Parents as reading teachers: Vocabulary development by age 3 has been found to predict reading achievement by third grade. Preschoolers whose parents (especially mothers) read to them, tell stories or sing songs tend to develop larger vocabularies, become better readers and perform better in school, while children who lack this stimulation during early childhood tend to arrive at school with measurably weaker language, cognitive and memory skills ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

A literacy-rich home environment: A literacy-rich home environment is crucial for young learners, as early exposure to books, conversations and print materials significantly influences language development and reading success. Research shows that children who grow up in homes with access to books and frequent reading experiences develop stronger vocabulary, comprehension and early literacy skills ([Mol & Bus, 2011](#)). Parental engagement, such as reading aloud and discussing stories, fosters critical thinking and a love of reading, which are linked to long-term academic achievement ([Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002](#)). Additionally, the number of books in a home has been associated with higher literacy levels, regardless of socioeconomic status ([Evans et al., 2010](#)). Without these early experiences, children may enter school at a disadvantage, requiring additional support to build foundational literacy skills. Creating a literacy-rich home — through

books, storytelling and meaningful language interactions — helps lay the groundwork for future learning and academic success.

Research suggests that having books at home is strongly correlated with reading achievement. While there is no single “magic number,” studies indicate that children who grow up with **at least 100 books** in their home tend to have significantly stronger literacy skills by third grade and beyond ([Evans et al., 2010](#)). Another study found that children with **at least 20 books at home** showed improved reading proficiency compared to those with very few or no books ([Sikora, Evans, & Kelley, 2019](#)).

A larger home library — closer to **80-100 books or more** — is associated with greater reading advantages, particularly when combined with parental engagement in literacy activities ([Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002](#)).

While reading to kids at home and developing oral language skills is critical for their comprehension, that alone won't teach them how to actually read the words. Using the Science of Reading approach and focusing on ensuring children are gaining exposure to all the five pillars of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) should occur both at home and at school ([The Right to Read](#)).

# Parents as reading teachers

## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Children ages 1 to 5 whose family members read to them at least 3 days per week. Young children whose parents read to them, tell stories, or sing songs tend to develop larger vocabularies. (Data source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, “The National Survey of Children’s Health.”) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Encourage and enable parents, families, and caregivers to play their indispensable roles as co-producers of good outcomes for their children ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents read and converse with their very young children to instill the language and vocabulary skills that lead to proficient reading later on ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents cultivate a joy of learning, a sense that reading is pleasurable, and a desire for education ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents make sure their children show up for school every day ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents understand why it’s important to read proficiently by the end of third grade and then proactively monitor their children’s progress toward that goal ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents encourage their children to choose reading as a free-time activity ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- If a child struggles to read, the parent is able to find and mobilize the necessary help from teachers, schools, education specialists, and/or medical professionals ([Annie E. Casey](#)

[Foundation](#)).

- Parents find after-school activities for their children that provide literacy enrichment and summer learning activities that protect against summer learning loss ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Parents who can’t read develop their own literacy skills and, when necessary, English language skills so they can help their children succeed in school ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Institutions help parents complete their own education, both as a way to improve families’ economic self-sufficiency and because of the positive impact it has on children’s school success ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Strong Readers Strong Leaders (through the Mississippi Department of Education) provides parents/guardians resources to assess their child’s reading level and exercises to improve their phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension ([Strong Readers Strong Leaders](#)).
- The Family Literacy Calendar (published by Day By Day Ohio) provides families resources and suggestions to help practice reading skills in the home. These include songs to sing, videos to watch, ideas for books to read, and other literacy-rich activities ([Day By Day Ohio](#)).

## Literacy-rich environments

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- A child's responses to a Reading Attitudes Survey (e.g., the Garfield Survey) to determine their student's attitudes toward reading, that include interests, strengths, and struggles in literacy ([Garfield Survey](#)).

### Practices

#### Practices

- Invest in places that build social capital, such as schools, libraries, community centers, and parks ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Encouragement for reading embedded in the agencies and institutes that work and interact with young children and families ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Hands-on, literacy-rich activities that make learning in and outside school engaging and fun ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).



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**Do students have access to quality after-school and summer enrichment programming to reinforce classroom learning and prevent learning loss?**

### Why it matters



After-school programming: After-school programs can foster literacy, especially for English Language Learners. "Language acquisition is a complex and inherently social process, calling for varied learning opportunities beyond the reach of schools alone... Good after-school programming motivates children to use their English to participate in games, activities and projects. Supportive adult and peer relationships that develop without the pressure of grades and tests help children feel safe using their emerging English and allow them to take risks, going further with new vocabulary and

constructions" ([Claudia Weisburd](#) as quoted in [Annie E. Casey Foundation's](#) "Early Warning").

"With its informal environment, learner-centered and project-based approaches, homework time, lower student-to-staff ratios, and greater interaction with parents, after-school offers richly different language learning opportunities that complement ELL teaching and learning during the school day. This highly communicative social setting is fertile ground for helping students expand their language skills, develop as students, and connect with schooling." ([Claudia Weisburd](#)

as quoted in [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)’s “Early Warning”).

Summer enrichment programming: Too many children lose ground during the summer months. Children of all socioeconomic groups make similar achievement gains during the school year (relative to their starting points), but research shows that children experiencing poverty fall behind during

the summer by as much as two months of reading achievement — while their middle-income peers make slight gains. ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)). Summer learning experiences during the early school years also substantially account for higher achievement in terms of placement in a college preparatory track, high school completion and attendance at a four-year college ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

## After-school programming

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students who have access to and enroll in after-school programming ([University of Virginia](#)).

### Practices and policies

#### Practices

- The What Works Clearinghouse recommends the following key features for effective out-of-school programs: the program should be aligned academically with the school curriculum, maximize student participation and attendance, adapt instruction to individual and small group needs, and provide engaging learning experiences for students ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Ensure high-quality programs are accessible for full days, during non-traditional hours, before and after school, and over the summer ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Support home-based care providers in enhancing learning opportunities for children in their care ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Universal access to, and greater use of, high-quality programs for child care, early learning, school readiness, pre-school, K-3, after-school,

and summer learning experiences ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

- Summer Learning Framework, which offers districts guidance on how to plan impactful summer programming ([Texas Education Agency](#)).

#### Policies

- Mississippi’s 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act required providing intensive tutoring and summer literacy camps for students at risk of retention ([Bellwether](#)).
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a federal funding source dedicated to supporting local afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs ([Afterschool Alliance](#)).
- Tennessee enacted legislation to create after-school and summer learning camps, prioritizing enrollment for K-4 students scoring below proficiency in key subjects. This reflects a policy-level effort to track and enhance student participation in supplemental learning programs ([Tennessee Senate Bill 7002](#)).



# Summer programming

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Academic content that complements curricular standards and is taught by at least one experienced, trained teacher per classroom ([Child Trends](#)).
- Academic classes that are limited to 15 students, with at least two adults (one lead teacher and one teaching assistant, for example) ([Child Trends](#)).
- Group learning that is complemented with individual support ([Child Trends](#)).
- Fun and engaging activities that are used to teach concepts ([Child Trends](#)).
- Hands-on activities that are used to teach concepts ([Child Trends](#)).
- Concepts that are grounded in a real-world context ([Child Trends](#)).
- Identifying effective summer learning programs and approaches and replicating them ([Child Trends](#)).
- Extending effective school-year, out-of-school time programs that have academic components through the summer ([Child Trends](#)).
- Establishing extended-year or year-round schools that incorporate practices and approaches from effective summer learning programs ([Child Trends](#)).
- Universal access to, and greater use of, high-quality programs for child care, early learning, school readiness, pre-school, K-3, after-school, and summer learning experiences ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

### Policies

- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act required providing intensive tutoring and summer literacy camps for students at risk of retention ([Bellwether](#)).
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (state grants for afterschool programs) ([Afterschool Alliance](#)).

# Positive School Environment

Positive, literacy-rich school environments create the conditions for safety, inclusivity and support by focusing on holistic child development and approaches. Young learners want to attend school consistently when environments are positive and supportive.



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**Do young learners attend schools with safe, inclusive and supportive environments?**

## Why it matters



Safe, inclusive and supportive environments:

A sense of belonging in school contributes to improved achievement, well-being and health. When young learners feel they belong, they experience higher levels of motivation, engagement and tenacity ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Climate surveys, which measure experiences beyond academic ones, are typically used to understand the extent to which students and educators feel safe, seen and connected. Positive climate survey results are positively associated with stronger academic and behavioral outcomes ([StriveTogether 2021](#)). Children have safe, inclusive and supportive learning experiences when their identities are considered, reflected and

celebrated in their learning environment. This kind of environment also offers resources that allow their teachers to provide an inclusive environment for children. Children who see themselves in books, in artwork and in characters, and who have teachers who look like them, have more equitable, engaging learning experiences ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

School and workplace racial and ethnic diversity:

Greater diversity is shown to reduce intergroup prejudice and improve intelligence and innovation ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Racial and ethnic diversity is positively associated with children's language development in early learning

programs ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Workplaces with a diverse team see better employee interpersonal skills and innovation, better financial performance and less conflict ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

School and workplace economic diversity: The disparity in average school poverty rates between white and Black students is the single most important predictor of differences between their academic achievement ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). The relationship between economic segregation and outcomes begins in early childhood, where children's academic achievement and social-emotional development have been linked to the average socioeconomic status of their classroom, regardless of a child's own economic or demographic background ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

School safety: School safety is a core component of a school's climate, which is linked to higher attendance and academic achievement ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Research shows disparities in students' feelings of safety according to their race and ethnicity. For example, one study found that students in schools serving

predominantly Black and Latine populations report feeling less safe and having less positive peer interactions than those at schools with predominantly white and Asian populations, on average ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Even within the same schools, Black and Latine students report feeling less safe than their white and Asian peers ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

School and family engagement: School engagement with families provides benefits to students academically and socially, both in short-term school success and long-term outcomes ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Although family engagement is key to students' educational success, not all schools successfully build a culture that welcomes and engages all families, and especially families of color. For example, an analysis of parent survey data in California found that perceptions of how well the school encouraged parental involvement were significantly lower among Indigenous parents compared to other groups ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## School-family engagement

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Mean scores on family surveys, such as the Panorama Family-School Relationships Survey or CORE Districts School Culture & Climate Survey parent assessment of school-community engagement ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Invest in family engagement strategies that value parents as experts in their children's development ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Set goals and track outcomes in ways that engage families in their children's learning

([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Co-locate or coordinate programs and services to improve family access ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Community schools operate as community hubs, bringing together many partners to offer education, health and social services, and youth and community development for children, young people, parents, and other community members during extended hours and weekends ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Achieving desired reading outcomes hinges not only on the individual efforts of schools and families, but most importantly on the two working together while also incorporating community-based assets and supports ([Shanker Institute](#)).

## Policies

- States should keep prioritizing legislation that supports authentic school-home-community collaboration to improve children's reading.
- States that currently inform parents about their children's reading performance should consider modeling after states that are trying to foster genuine school-family partnerships around literacy. (Model state: Alaska) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Legislation in many more states could leverage libraries and other community assets to promote students' reading development. (Model state: Colorado) ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Engaging families in their children's education is known to have a positive effect on their school readiness and later academic outcomes. Engagement strategies that are designed as a core component of an improvement plan and focused on improving educational outcomes for all children are most effective, helping to mobilize families and others in the community to share the responsibility ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Alaska's HB 114 provides an example of giving parents a voice in their children's literacy education. The law requires that each public school in the state annually provides to parents and guardians of K-3 students current information on the importance of literacy and early reading. This includes: (1) culturally responsive intervention strategies and reading intervention services; (2) home reading plans; (3) grade progression standards and policies for the elementary school attended; (4) strategies and resources to help children learn to read; and (5) a list of resources and organizations that specialize in improving adult literacy ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Alaska's law requires establishing a partnership with parents and guardians to support their child's literacy development through intervention services. This entails offering a "list of adult literacy resources and organizations, providing opportunities for parent or guardian participation in training workshops, and encouraging regular parent or guardian-guided home reading activities." ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Alaska's law requires that parents and guardians be an active participant in creating their child's literacy improvement plan. This involves the development of a plan in consultation with the reading teacher, school principal, and other pertinent district staff; receiving reading progress updates each year; and acquiring strategies to use at home to help their children succeed in reading ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Finally, Alaska's law promotes a statewide "parents as teachers" program for the benefit of children who are under 5 years of age. This home-based program includes a curriculum on early language and literacy development along with ongoing coaching to enhance parents' understanding of important child development principles and developmental milestones ([Shanker Institute](#)).
- Mississippi's 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act requires local school boards to submit quarterly public progress reports to parents on their students' reading progress and publish data on reading performance in a local newspaper ([Bellwether](#)).
- Legislators should ensure that parents and teachers have a voice in policy decisions. This could involve their participation in literacy committees or input through surveys or interviews. Laws should embody a spirit of collaboration; excessive prescriptiveness and rigidity, such as outright bans on practices, hinder this and can prove impractical. The emphasis should be on adaptability, respect, and positive interactions with educators and families, who are critical for the success of reading reform. Ultimately, it's parents and teachers, with their direct connection to students, who support everyday learning and bring these reforms to life ([Shanker Institute](#)).





## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students reporting high levels of physical, mental, and emotional safety in school climate surveys, such as the U.S. Department of Education [ED School Climate Surveys \(EDSCLS\)](#), the Sense of Safety subscale within the [CORE Districts](#) school culture and climate survey, or the School Safety subscale within the [Panorama Student Survey \(Education-to-Workforce Framework\)](#).
- Percentage of students indicating they feel safe and cared for at their school ([National Education Association](#)).
- Number of documented incidents that occurred at the school of: Robbery with a weapon; Robbery without a weapon; Physical attack or fight with a weapon; Physical attack or fight without a weapon; Threat of physical attack with a weapon; Threat of physical attack without a weapon; Rape or attempted rape; Sexual assault (other than rape); Possession of a firearm or explosive device; Shooting (regardless of whether anyone was hurt); Students, faculty, or staff deaths as a result of a homicide ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Whether any of the school's students, faculty, or staff died as a result of a homicide committed at the school ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Whether there has been at least one incident at the school that involved a shooting (regardless of whether anyone was hurt) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of documented incidents of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] committed by a student that occurred at the school ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of documented incidents of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] committed by a school staff member that occurred at the school.
- Number of allegations made against a school staff member of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] that occurred at the school, which were followed by a resignation or retirement prior to final discipline or termination ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of allegations made against a school staff member of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] that occurred at the school, which were followed by a determination that the school staff member was responsible for the offense ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of allegations made against a school staff member of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] that occurred at the school, which were followed by a determination that the school staff member was not responsible for the offense ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of allegations made against a school staff member of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] that occurred at the school, which had a determination that remained pending ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of allegations made against a school staff member of offenses [rape or attempted rape; sexual assault (other than rape)] that occurred at the school, which were followed by a duty reassignment prior to final discipline or termination ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of reported allegations of harassment

or bullying of K-12 students on the basis of: sex; sexual orientation; gender identity; race, color, or national origin; disability; religion ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).

- Number of reported allegations of harassment or bullying of K-12 students on the basis of perceived religion (disaggregated by atheism/agnosticism; Buddhist; Catholic; Eastern Orthodox; Hindu; Islamic (Muslim); Jehovah's Witness; Jewish; Mormon; multiple religions, group; other Christian; other religion; Protestant; Sikh) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of K-12 students reported as harassed or bullied on the basis of: sex; race, color, or national origin; disability [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-IDEA, disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of K-12 students disciplined for engaging in harassment or bullying on the basis of: sex; race, color, or national origin; disability [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-IDEA, disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of educators surveyed indicating they feel safe and cared for at their school ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of public school employees in each job category who have received in-service training on intervention techniques, such as restorative practices ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools report disaggregated data on incidents of student bullying on a daily or weekly basis ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of program sites that ensure the safety and security of children and workforce members, in programs where focal populations

make up at least half of the student population ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

- Student-to-counselor ratio and access to school social workers.
- Whether an LEA has a written policy or policies prohibiting harassment or bullying of students on the basis of all of the following: sex; race, color, or national origin; disability (LEA) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Web link to policy or policies prohibiting harassment or bullying of students on the basis of all of the following: sex; race, color, or national origin; disability (LEA) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Whether an LEA has a written policy or policies prohibiting harassment or bullying of students on the basis of: sexual orientation; gender identity; or religion (LEA) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Web link to policy or policies prohibiting harassment or bullying of students on the basis of: sexual orientation; gender identity; or religion (LEA) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Facilities that are safe, healthy, inviting, welcoming, and conducive to teaching and learning ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Districts educate all school personnel on intervention techniques in incidents of student bullying and harassment, such as restorative practices and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) ([National Education Association](#)).

### Policies

- Districts allocate resources toward interventions around student safety issues (e.g., LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment) ([National Education Association](#)).



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of children in pre-K reporting positive feelings toward their school, as measured by questionnaires such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) How I Feel About My School questionnaire, or percentage of classrooms demonstrating equitable socio cultural interactions, as measured by observational assessments, such as Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of students in K-12 reporting belonging in school, as measured by surveys such as the Sense of Belonging subscale of the CORE Districts school culture and climate survey, the Classroom Belonging subscale of the Panorama Student Survey, or the Elevate survey's Affirming Identities and Classroom Community scales ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of students experiencing mechanical versus physical constraint and seclusion (Data source: Civil Rights Data Collection) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of students experiencing school-related arrests (Data source: Civil Rights Data Collection) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of students receiving in-school or out-of-school suspensions (Data source: Civil Rights Data Collection) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Sense of belonging and connection to school community (Data sources: Youth Risk Behavior Survey; local school climate surveys) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Student perceptions of their school's inclusion of their history, culture and racial identity (Data sources: Local school climate surveys) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).

### Systems indicators

- Percentage of teachers who have received professional development in culturally-responsive pedagogy ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers who have received professional learning time in equity and racial and social justice ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers who have received professional learning time in implicit bias ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of teachers who have received professional learning time in trauma-related practices ([National Education Association](#)).
- Measurement of bullying, harassment and discrimination (Data sources: Youth Risk Behavior Survey; local school climate surveys) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Schools annually report on school climate and student engagement ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools have data-driven, site-based school climate and student engagement plans ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of programs where classrooms demonstrate equitable socio-cultural interactions ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of system-level funding that is allocated to equity-focused activities targeted to children, families and/or workforce members from focal populations ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Results from publicly available school climate surveys ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Districts dedicate professional learning time to culturally-responsive pedagogy ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts dedicate professional learning time to equity and racial and social justice ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts dedicate professional learning time to implicit bias ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts dedicate professional learning time to trauma-informed practices ([National Education Association](#)).

### Policies

- Districts allocate funds to advance educators' awareness of implicit bias ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts allocate funds to advance educators' competence in culturally-responsive pedagogy ([National Education Association](#)).

- Districts allocate funds to advance educators' understanding of equity and racial and social justice ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts allocate funds to advance educators' understanding of trauma-informed practices ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts allocate resources to a workforce wellness and safety program, ensuring educators of color and LGBTQ+ educators feel safe and cared for in their schools ([National Education Association](#)).
- State develops a policy that requires annual reporting by school on school climate and student engagement ([National Education Association](#)).
- Fostering positive learning environments for students, including by reducing class sizes, developing programs that prevent bullying, moving away from punitive disciplinary practices and applying other trauma-informed practices ([Urban Institute](#)).

### School and workplace racial and ethnic diversity

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Student body composition by race and ethnicity. Student and employee demographics are reported regularly in administrative data systems. Unlike postsecondary institutions

and employers, however, pre-K and K–12 institutions have less direct control over the demographics of their populations. Thus, this indicator should be used to identify policy solutions to address ongoing segregation rather than penalize institutions. ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### School and workplace socioeconomic diversity

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Systems indicators

- Student body composition by income ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Share of students attending high-poverty schools, by race or ethnicity. Children from families with low incomes and children of color

achieve better academic outcomes when they attend more economically and racially diverse schools. ([Urban Institute](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Use of research and data tools to understand



school and workplace socioeconomic diversity to understand equity issues and trends ([National Equity Atlas](#)).

## Policies

- Creating more equitable school attendance boundaries ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Developing centralized school lottery application systems that prioritize school diversity ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Ending school and neighborhood segregation, including by expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods and reforming zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Implementing more equitable school funding policies and advocating for reforms to state and federal funding ([Urban Institute](#)).



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## Do young learners attend schools that prioritize their social, emotional and physical development and well-being?

### Why it matters



Schools can be a critical place to access support for students' physical, mental and social-emotional health. For example, three out of four students who ever access mental health services do so through their school ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Schools that provide access to nurses, school psychologists and social workers tend to see improved learning outcomes, school climate and student well-being ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

**Social-emotional skills:** Social-emotional skills are just as essential as cognitive skills for school success. These skills include the ability to manage emotions, follow directions, take turns, share, take responsibility, work independently and cooperatively, and stick with a task; motivation; enjoyment of learning; and the executive function — an ability to control oneself, make plans, learn rules, act appropriately and think in abstract terms

([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

**Access to health, mental health and social supports:** Regular well-child visits provide an opportunity for health professionals to monitor children's physical and behavioral health and development, provide age-appropriate guidance to parents and screen for maternal depression ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)). Well-child visits screen children for common concerns in early childhood, including lead poisoning, hearing and vision problems, behavior problems and delayed speech and language development ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)). Timely, age-appropriate immunizations usually indicate that a child has access to regular medical care. Vaccines are cost-effective tools that prevent children from developing severe diseases ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students in K-12 reporting a high level of social-emotional skills (e.g., social awareness, self-management, growth mindset, self-efficacy) on surveys such as the CORE Districts SEL Survey social awareness scale, or percentage of students meeting benchmarks on teacher ratings of social skills drawn from Elliott and Gresham's Social Skills Rating Scale ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of youth in K-12 with mental or emotional health needs as identified by a universal screening tool. For a list of mental health screening tools that may be appropriate for school-based use, see the following guide from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments: "Mental Health Screening Tools for Grades K-12" ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of children in pre-K with identified health or developmental concerns as identified by a developmental screening tool. For a list of screening tools that may be appropriate for children younger than age 5, see the following guide from the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center: "Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! A Compendium of Screening Measures for Young Children" ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Encourage play to help develop social, emotional, and executive function skills ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) best practices for building inclusive school environments through social-emotional learning ([CASEL](#)).



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students or individuals reporting a high level of social capital on surveys such as the [Social Capital Assessment + Learning for Equity \(SCALE\)](#) Social Capital, Network Diversity, and Network Strength scales ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- The EW Framework recommends consulting guidance by the [Christensen Institute](#) that describes emerging practices for measuring students' social capital using a four-dimensional framework based on quantity of relationships, quality of relationships, structure of networks, and ability to mobilize relationships ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- To measure concentration of social capital at a systems level, users could consider an index adapted from researchers [Anil Rupasingha and Stephan Goetz](#). Their index includes: the number of all associations per 10,000 population, including religious organizations, civic and social associations, political organizations, professional organizations, labor organizations, bowling centers, physical fitness facilities, public golf courses, and sports clubs. The measure also includes commercial and nonprofit associations drawn from Census Bureau County Business Patterns data. It also includes:
- The percentage of voters who participated in a presidential, state, or county election ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

### Systems Indicators

- The county-level census response rate in the person's county ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- The number of charitable, nonprofit organizations with an office in the county ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Practices

### Practices

- Schools and nonprofit organizations can help cultivate social capital among young people through educational and non-educational programming ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

**Access to health, mental health and social supports** *Key source: Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Ratio of number of students to number of health, mental health, and social services full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (for example, school nurses, psychologists, and social workers) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- The U.S. Department of Education's [National Teacher and Principal Survey](#) collects data on the number of FTE nurses, psychologists, and social workers among a sample of schools ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Children under age 6 with [medical homes](#) ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Young children (ages 19-36 months) who complete the basic series of age-appropriate immunizations against measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, haemophilus influenza and hepatitis B (series 4-3-1-3-3) ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Percentage of children ages 19-35 months who have been fully immunized ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of children ages 0-8 who have received all required immunizations ([National Education Association](#)).
- Children ages 2-6 years receiving dental care in the last 12 months ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Children ages 2 to 5 who receive WIC services with a BMI at or above the 85th percentile ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Children hospitalized for asthma (ICD-9 Codes: 493.0-493.9) per 100,000 children less than 5 years of age ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Children under age 6 with blood lead levels at or above 10 micrograms per deciliter ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect among children from birth to age 6 ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Children with special health care needs age 0-6 who receive coordinated, ongoing comprehensive care within a medical home ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Percentage of eligible students enrolled in free and reduced-price school breakfast and lunch programs ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of 2-year-olds with a recent well-child visit that included a lead screening, vision screening, hearing screening and comprehensive developmental screening ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of children under age 6 who received a well-child check-up in the past year ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Proportion of youth experiencing poor mental health (Data Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System) ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of youth with mental or emotional health needs as identified by a universal screening tool. For a list of mental health screening tools that may be appropriate for school-based use, see the following guide from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments: "[Mental Health Screening Tools for Grades K-12](#)" ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Systems indicators

- Child care centers that have access to ongoing health or mental health consultation ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Eligible schools are enrolled in free and reduced-price school breakfast and lunch programs ([National Education Association](#)).
- Ratio of number of students to number of health, mental health and social services full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (for example, school nurses, psychologists and social workers) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Number and type of in-school health workers ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) surveyed indicating satisfaction with time dedicated toward collaboration ([National Education Association](#)).
- Percentage of programs offering health, mental health and social services, or staff or consultants providing infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) services ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Proportion of schools with behavioral/mental health services and on-site staff ([StriveTogether 2021](#)).
- Percentage of programs offering health, mental health and social services in-house, including staff or consultants providing infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) services ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Invest in strategies that address the behavioral

and mental health of children and the adults who care for them ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).

- Districts provide adequate resources for student-to-specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) to collaborate with teachers, education support professionals (ESPs), parents and students. ([National Education Association](#)).
- Districts provide student-to-specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) with adequate time to collaborate with teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Pediatricians use developmental milestone assessments, like the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), during regular well visits.
- School-based supports for child health and well-being, such as physicals, vaccinations, dental and vision care, therapy and other mental health services ([Results for America](#)).

### Policies

- Providing access to health care ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Districts require a favorable student-to-specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) ratio (Optimal ratios include: school counselors – 250:1; school nurses – 750:1; school psychologists – 500-700:1; school social workers – 250:1) ([National Education Association](#)).
- State and/or district pays for school-based health workforce, including nurses and counselors ([National Education Association](#)).
- State requires that all school-age children are appropriately immunized before entering school ([National Education Association](#)).

## Physical development and well-being

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students meeting benchmarks on self-rated surveys of physical health, such as the

California Healthy Kids Survey [Physical Health & Nutrition module](#) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

- The EW Framework recommends measuring physical development and well-being using self-



reports on surveys. Although physical fitness tests and activity trackers are viable alternatives to self-reports, survey data may be more feasible to collect at scale while mitigating potential concerns about shaming and privacy. As one example, California administers both a survey and a physical fitness test to K–12 students. However, it recently eliminated the Body Composition component of the test amid concerns about its value and risk for unintended consequences and is reassessing whether to continue with the test at all ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

has been required to administer the [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) at least once every two years and make the results publicly available. CHKS is an anonymous, confidential survey for students in grades 5 and above designed to help school communities identify students’ needs. It is based on a strengths-based framework drawn from resilience and youth development research. CHKS covers several dimensions of school climate and student well-being, including physical and mental well-being and safety. Although there is a core survey that must be administered, school districts can select supplementary modules for more in-depth questions on different topics or add a custom module to measure other topics relevant to their community.

## Policies

### Policies

- Since 2003, every school district in California



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## Are young learners demonstrating consistent attendance?

## Why it matters



Attendance: Attendance matters because succeeding in school requires being in school; a child who isn’t present isn’t acquiring what he or she needs to know to succeed there. Consistent attendance means a student attends school regularly, typically being present for 90% or more of the school year. Students who attend school consistently are more likely to read proficiently by third grade — research shows that students with satisfactory attendance (90% or higher) in kindergarten and first grade are twice as likely to be on track in third grade compared to those who are chronically absent ([Attendance Works](#)).

Chronic absenteeism refers to a student missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason, including both excused and unexcused absences. Chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in first grade. Chronic absenteeism is a big challenge for young learners, with at least 10% of kindergarten and first graders nationwide chronically absent from school, with students living in poverty four times more likely to be chronically absent ([New America](#)). For children experiencing poverty, chronic early absence predicts the lowest levels of educational achievement at the end of fifth grade ([Annie E.](#)

[Casey Foundation](#)). Chronic early absence can also signal problems within the school or community or a parent's unawareness that regular attendance matters. It also may be caused by major family stressors, such as a parent's physical or mental health condition, family violence, substance abuse or child abuse or neglect ([Annie E. Casey](#)

[Foundation](#)).

Research demonstrates a strong relationship between absenteeism and learning outcomes, and higher rates of absenteeism for disadvantaged students can widen achievement gaps ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

## Consistent attendance

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



## Indicators

### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students who are present for more than 90 percent of their enrolled days, excluding students enrolled for fewer than 90 days ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- K-12 chronic absenteeism ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- K-12 days of attendance ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- K-12 days of expected attendance ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Percentage of students who are present for more than 90% of their enrolled days, excluding students enrolled for fewer than 90 days ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of students with less than 10 absences in a school year (or less than 5 percent of the school year) ([National Education Association](#)).
- Proportion of K-12 chronically absent students ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Average number of days children from focal populations were present in preschool ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).
- Percentage of enrolled preschool children from focal populations who are present for more than

90% of their enrolled days, excluding children enrolled for less than three months ([STEP Forward with Data Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Prepare children for entry into school through high-quality early care and education experiences, characterized by well-trained staff; low student/staff ratios; safe facilities; and culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate curricula ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Ensure access to preventative health care, especially as children enter school. This may include not only expanding enrollment in children's health insurance, but also providing children with immunizations and comprehensive screenings (vision, dental, hearing, and developmental delays) ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Offer a high-quality education that responds to the diverse learning styles and needs of students. When the educational experience engages children's interest and meets their learning needs, families are much more likely to feel that going to school is worthwhile ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Implement early warning systems to identify problems, such as chronic absence, to allow for timely intervention ([Alliance for Early Success](#)).
- Engage families of all backgrounds in their children's education. Attendance improves when schools create a wide variety of opportunities for families from all backgrounds to support their

child's learning ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).

- Educate parents about the importance of attendance ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Encourage families to help each other attend school ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Offer incentives for excellent attendance to all children, such as materials (pencils or toys), acknowledgement in class or at morning assembly, extra recess time, opportunities to dress casually if uniforms are required ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Conduct early outreach to families with poor attendance and, if appropriate, case management to address social, medical, economic, and academic needs ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Coordinate public-agency and, if needed, legal response for families in crisis ([Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)).
- Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP): A home visiting program that identifies and partners with families to improve student attendance and family engagement ([Connecticut Department of Education](#)).
- School employs a tiered approach to improving

attendance by promoting positive conditions for learning ([Attendance Works](#)).

- Creating a culture of attendance by taking a positive, not punitive, approach to absenteeism that is centered on belonging and engagement, and helping everyone to understand why daily attendance matters in pre-K through 12th grade ([Attendance Works](#)).

## Policies

- States establish standards for accountability, adopt regulations and provide guidance that sets expectations for school districts and schools to achieve ([Attendance Works](#)).
- States ensure consistent and comparable data across schools and districts by specifying how attendance concepts are defined and offering guidance on how to collect accurate data ([Attendance Works](#)).
- The U.S. Department of Education collects and reports chronic absence data. States must track chronic absenteeism as a school quality indicator, along with more traditional academic measures for accountability in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) ([Attendance Works](#)).



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## Are there young learners who disproportionately experience exclusionary discipline?

### Why it matters



Discipline practices: Research documents persistent disparities in exclusionary discipline — that is, disciplinary actions that remove students from their educational setting, such as

an in- or out-of-school suspension — along race, socioeconomic background and disability status ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)). Research also suggests that high rates of suspension and

expulsion reduces students' opportunity to learn, increases likelihood of dropping out or becoming disengaged from school and disproportionately affects Black and Latine students as well as students receiving special education ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)). School practices

play a key role in determining students' disciplinary outcomes. Different approaches to discipline, such as restorative justice and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), may be related to improvements in school culture and climate ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Equitable discipline practices

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



# Indicators

## Contributing indicators

- Differences in the rates at which students from key demographic subgroups ever experience different forms of school discipline (office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, restraint, and exclusion) relative to those students' representation in their school population as a whole ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Disproportionalities along the lines of key demographic characteristics in the level of school discipline experienced (for example, number of days suspended) ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Children under age 6 who are expelled from child care or preschools due to behavioral problems ([Project Thrive, NCCP](#)).
- Percentage of students subjected to disciplinary action in the past year ([National Education Association](#)).
- Students (K-12) who received one or more in-school suspension: Number of students without disabilities who received one or more in-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) who received one or more in-school suspension: Number of students with disabilities who received one or more in-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students who received one out-of-school suspension: Number of K-12 students without disabilities who received one out-of-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students who received one out-of-school suspension: Number of K-12 students with disabilities who received one out-of-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students who received more than one out-of-school suspension: Number of K-12 students without disabilities who received more than one out-of-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students who received more than one out-of-school suspension: Number of K-12 students with disabilities who received more than one out-of-school suspension [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) who were expelled (with educational services; without educational services; because of zero-tolerance policies) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students without disabilities who were expelled (with educational services; without educational services; because of zero-tolerance policies) [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).



- Number of students with disabilities who were expelled (with educational services; without educational services; because of zero-tolerance policies) [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) who were transferred for disciplinary reasons to alternative school
- Number of students without disabilities who were transferred for disciplinary reasons to alternative school [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities who were transferred for disciplinary reasons to alternative school [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL]. ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students who received corporal punishment ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of K-12 students without disabilities who received corporal punishment [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of K-12 students with disabilities who received corporal punishment [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of instances of corporal punishment that K-12 students received (disaggregated by students without disabilities, students with disabilities) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of instances of out-of-school suspensions that K-12 students received (disaggregated by students without disabilities, students with disabilities-IDEA, students with disabilities-Section 504 only) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of school days missed by K-12 students who received out-of-school suspensions [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-IDEA, disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) who were referred to law enforcement agency or official:
- Number of students without disabilities who were referred to law enforcement agency or official [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities who were referred to law enforcement agency or official [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of instances of referrals to law enforcement that K-12 students received (disaggregated by students without disabilities, students with disabilities-IDEA, students with disabilities-Section 504 only) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) who were arrested for school-related activity ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students without disabilities who were arrested for school-related activity [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities who were arrested for school-related activity [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of instances of school-related arrests that K-12 students received (disaggregated by students without disabilities, students with disabilities-IDEA, students with disabilities-Section 504 only) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) subjected to mechanical restraint:
  - o Number of non-IDEA students subjected to mechanical restraint [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities (IDEA)

subjected to mechanical restraint [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).

- Students (K-12) subjected to physical restraint ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of non-IDEA students subjected to physical restraint [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities (IDEA) subjected to physical restraint [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Students (K-12) subjected to seclusion ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of non-IDEA students subjected to seclusion [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), disability-Section 504 only, EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of students with disabilities (IDEA) subjected to seclusion [disaggregated by race, sex (male, female, nonbinary), EL] ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).
- Number of instances of mechanical restraint, physical restraint, seclusion (disaggregated by students without disabilities, students with disabilities-IDEA, students with disabilities-Section 504 only) ([Civil Rights Data Collection, Office for Civil Rights](#)).

### Systems indicators

- K-12 institution suspension rate ([California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions](#)).
- Schools collect and publicly report demographic data recording behavior and behavioral interventions leading to disciplinary exclusion from school ([National Education Association](#)).
- Behavioral reasons for discipline ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).
- Discipline equity gaps by student subgroups ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

- Percent of total instructional time missed ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).
- Suspension, expulsion and overall exclusionary discipline rates and numbers of students impacted ([Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework](#)).

## Practices and policies

### Practices

- Schools offer alternatives to traditional behavioral interventions, such as restorative practices ([National Education Association](#)).
- Schools use Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) ([Results for America](#)).
- The Incredible Years: A series of early intervention programs for children ages 3-9 aimed to reduce the prevalence of behavioral and conduct issues ([Results for America](#)).
- Invest in public health strategies to create safe schools ([Center for Policing Equity](#)).
- My Brother's Keeper, a national program reducing exclusionary discipline and promoting equity for young men of color ([My Brother's Keeper Alliance](#)).

### Policies

- Districts allocate resources toward restorative practices ([National Education Association](#)).
- State policy requires schools to collect and publicly report demographic data recording behavior and behavioral interventions leading to disciplinary exclusion from school. Disciplinary actions include in-school/out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, arrests and referrals to law enforcement ([National Education Association](#)).
- Policies support the integration of behavioral health services in schools to address underlying issues before they result in disciplinary actions.



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## Are young learners demonstrating positive behavior?

### Why it matters



**Positive behavior:** Young learner school experience is more positive and productive when they have a sense of personal well-being established through stable, caring relationships in their early lives. Emotional health and social competence enable children to participate in learning and form good relationships with teachers and peers ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)). Success in school depends

not only on academic skills, but also on the learning styles, habits and attitudes with which students approach learning ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)). Student behavior is a strong predictor of later outcomes and is a component of many early warning indicators, along with attendance and course grades ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

#### Positive behavior

Key source: *Education-to-Workforce Framework*



*Positive behavior is more than students not getting in trouble. Positive behavior includes conflict-resolution skills, the ability to cooperate and collaborate with others, self-regulation and management, making healthy choices, fostering strong relationships with peers and adults, and engaging in school activities.*

### Indicators

#### Contributing indicators

- Percentage of children who do not experience any of the following: in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, disciplinary use of restraint and seclusion, or expulsions. Although the absence of exclusionary discipline is not a perfect measure of positive behavior, the EW Framework recommends using the proposed metric as the most feasible proxy given the widespread availability of discipline data and their value in predicting future academic outcomes. As a system condition, the EW Framework also recommends monitoring disproportionality in suspensions and other disciplinary actions to address bias ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).
- Percentage of children who often or very often exhibit positive social behaviors when interacting with their peers ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).
- Percentage of students who can function appropriately in group learning activities, participating actively, taking turns, following directions and working cooperatively. ([Rhode Island Kids Count](#)).

- Percentage of children who do not experience any of the following: in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, disciplinary use of restraint and seclusion, or expulsions ([Education-to-Workforce Framework](#)).

## Policies and Practices

### Practices

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Research-based strategies for promoting

positive behavior through school-wide interventions ([PBIS](#)).

- Restorative Justice in Schools: strategies for non-punitive discipline and fostering a positive school climate ([National Association of Community and Restorative Justice](#)).
- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers research and tools on school climate, student behavior, and emotional well-being ([NCSSLE](#)).



# Appendix

## A. Design principles

Based on interviews with network members and conversations with StriveTogether staff, the following design principles were used to guide the writing of this playbook.

- **Expand depth and breadth:** Expand on existing framework by including indicators from multiple domains.
- **Universal navigation:** The playbook will be a tool for all audiences, Cradle to Career Network members, their communities and any organization working to improve cradle-to-career outcomes. Organize the playbook in an accessible way, using flags/tags and including detailed research in the appendix.
- **Honor local context:** Organizations work closely with their communities to identify and pursue solutions that they believe will work. We will create the playbook as a way to enhance the hyper-local process communities use. This means referencing the community-centered planning processes, which starts by consulting the community and letting community voices lead the planning process. The playbook will likely be part of the second or third step, but not necessarily the first.
- **Speak the language:** Align to StriveTogether language, not jargon.
  - › Make the playbook language easy to understand.
  - › Create consistent language by resolving similar concepts using different terminology. By aligning other frameworks behind the E-W framework, we can “crosswalk” and translate concepts into a common language.
- **Clear sourcing:** Cite all sources so that readers can dig deeper in areas of interest.
  - › Highlight and center various source frameworks within the playbook, not just in the appendix.
  - › Provide an annotated bibliography

## B. Spreadsheet

Essential questions, indicators, practices and policies have been added to a spreadsheet to make it easier for communities to sort by priority area. The spreadsheet is available [here](#).



# Bibliography



## A. Frameworks incorporated

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
California's Cradle-to-Career Data System	<a href="#">Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions</a>	Yes	A document defining key data points used in California's Cradle-to-Career Data System, aimed at tracking student progress from early education to workforce entry.
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)	<a href="#">Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework</a>	Yes	This framework from the CCSSO provides key indicators to measure and improve early childhood and elementary school outcomes.
National Education Association	<a href="#">Great Public Schools Indicators Framework</a>	Yes	A framework from the National Education Association outlining key indicators for evaluating education system performance.
Rhode Island Kids Count	<a href="#">Getting Ready</a>	Yes	This document discusses strategies for early childhood education readiness, focusing on preparing young children for school success.
StriveTogether	<a href="#">A guide to racial and ethnic equity systems indicators</a>	Yes	A guide providing metrics for assessing racial and ethnic equity in education and community systems.
Urban Institute	<a href="#">Boosting Upward Mobility</a>	Yes	A report offering data-driven approaches to enhance social and economic mobility at the local level.
Alliance for Early Success	<a href="#">Birth Through Eight State Policy Framework</a>		This framework outlines strategies and best practices for advancing early childhood policies and programs at the state and national levels.

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
Anil Rupasingha and Stephan J. Goetz	<a href="#">Social and political forces as determinants of poverty: A spatial analysis</a>		A research article analyzing key findings in educational policy and learning outcomes (requires access to view).
Annie E. Casey Foundation	<a href="#">Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters</a>		A report analyzing the importance of early warning indicators in education, particularly how third-grade reading proficiency predicts future academic success.
Attendance Works	<a href="#">Addressing Chronic Absence: 3 Tiers of Intervention</a>		Attendance Works outlines a three-tiered framework to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance.
Bellwether	<a href="#">On the Same Page: A Primer on the Science of Reading and Its Future for Policymakers, School Leaders, and Advocates</a>		A 2024 report discussing challenges and solutions for achieving literacy goals, focusing on disparities in reading proficiency.
Brookings Institute	<a href="#">Policies that Reduce Intergenerational Poverty</a>		Brookings explores policy solutions aimed at breaking cycles of poverty across generations through education, economic support, and family stability.
Anil Rupasingha and Stephan J. Goetz	<a href="#">Social and political forces as determinants of poverty: A spatial analysis</a>		A research article analyzing key findings in educational policy and learning outcomes (requires access to view).
Annie E. Casey Foundation	<a href="#">Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters</a>		A report analyzing the importance of early warning indicators in education, particularly how third-grade reading proficiency predicts future academic success.
Attendance Works	<a href="#">Addressing Chronic Absence: 3 Tiers of Intervention</a>		Attendance Works outlines a three-tiered framework to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance.



Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
Bellwether	<a href="#"><u>On the Same Page: A Primer on the Science of Reading and Its Future for Policymakers, School Leaders, and Advocates</u></a>		A 2024 report discussing challenges and solutions for achieving literacy goals, focusing on disparities in reading proficiency.
Brookings Institute	<a href="#"><u>Policies that Reduce Intergenerational Poverty</u></a>		Brookings explores policy solutions aimed at breaking cycles of poverty across generations through education, economic support, and family stability.
California Department of Education	<a href="#"><u>California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy: Educational Programs and Services for English Learners</u></a>		This California Department of Education page outlines policies supporting multilingual learners in the state's education system.
California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (CalSCHLS)	<a href="#"><u>California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys</u></a>		The official website for the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (CalSCHLS), a statewide system assessing student well-being and school climate.
Californians Together	<a href="#"><u>The State of English Learners</u></a>		A resource analyzing the current status of English learners in California, addressing challenges, policies, and recommendations for improving outcomes.
Campaign for Grade-Level Reading	<a href="#"><u>Toward Bigger Outcomes</u></a>		This report explores strategies to enhance reading proficiency and long-term educational success for children from underserved communities.
Center for American Progress	<a href="#"><u>How To Expand Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care and Preschool</u></a>		This article from the Center for American Progress discusses strategies to improve access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education.
Century Foundation	<a href="#"><u>Ensuring Equitable Access to Dual-Language Immersion Programs: Supporting English Learners' Emerging Bilingualism</u></a>		This report discusses the importance of equitable access to dual-language immersion programs for English learners and emerging bilingual students.

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
Chattanooga 2.0	<a href="#"><u>Kindergarten Ready</u></a>		An online platform by Chattanooga 2.0 designed to support early childhood educators in assessing and preparing young children for kindergarten readiness.
Child Trends	<a href="#"><u>Fact Sheet: What works for Summer Learning Programs for Low-Income Children and Youth</u></a>		This report from Child Trends discusses the impact and importance of summer learning programs in preventing learning loss and promoting educational equity.
Child Trends	<a href="#"><u>System Transformation for Equitable Preschools (STEP Forward with Data) Framework</u></a>		Child Trends examines how data-driven strategies can improve access to high-quality preschool programs.
Children's Funding Project	<a href="#"><u>Voter-Approved Children's Funds</u></a>		This resource provides information on how communities can establish and sustain dedicated funding streams for children's services through voter-approved initiatives.
Connected Nation	<a href="#"><u>Press Release: Economics can help state broadband leaders rise to the challenge of universal internet access</u></a>		This article explores how economic strategies can help state broadband leaders expand universal internet access to bridge the digital divide.
Connecticut Department of Education	<a href="#"><u>Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)</u></a>		This Connecticut initiative aims to address chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance through targeted engagement strategies.
EdReports	<a href="#"><u>Selecting for Quality: 6 Key Adoption Steps</u></a>		This resource outlines key steps for adopting high-quality instructional materials in schools to improve student learning outcomes.
Education Trust	<a href="#"><u>Educators of Color Make the Case for Teacher Diversity</u></a>		This report highlights the importance of increasing teacher diversity and provides evidence supporting the benefits of educators of color in schools.
Education Trust-West	<a href="#"><u>Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color</u></a>		This report from Education Trust-West examines strategies for increasing diversity in the educator workforce and supporting teachers of color.

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework	<a href="#">Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework</a>		A resource offering data, research, and resources on the intersection of education and workforce development to improve economic mobility.
Emerging Bilingual Collaborative (EBC)	<a href="#">Multilingual Learning Toolkit</a>		This toolkit provides strategies and best practices for educators to support multilingual learners in early childhood and K-12 education.
Excel in Ed	<a href="#">Four Reasons Why Mississippi's Reading Gains Are Neither Myth Nor Miracle</a>		This article examines the key factors behind Mississippi's recent improvements in student reading proficiency, debunking myths and highlighting effective policies.
Head Start	<a href="#">Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences</a>		This publication discusses the impact of childhood trauma on long-term health and development, emphasizing early intervention strategies.
Instruction Partners	<a href="#">Early Literacy Playbook</a>		This page provides resources and best practices for improving early literacy instruction to enhance student reading outcomes.
Instruction Partners	<a href="#">Essential Practices in Early Literacy</a>		This document outlines research-backed strategies for educators to improve literacy instruction and support young readers.
Learning Policy Institute	<a href="#">Research Brief: California's Positive Outliers</a>		This brief examines schools that achieve exceptional student outcomes despite socioeconomic challenges, identifying factors contributing to their success.
LENA Technology for Early Language Development	<a href="#">Understanding LENA Technology</a>		LENA provides technology-based solutions to support early language development in children, helping caregivers and educators track and improve communication skills.
McKenna and Kear (1990)	<a href="#">Garfield Reading Attitudes Survey</a>		This webpage appears to host a survey related to attitudes and perceptions on a particular topic, possibly for research or educational purposes.
National Center for Children in Poverty	<a href="#">State Indicators for Early Childhood</a>		This report from the National Center for Children in Poverty examines policies and interventions that support early childhood development and reduce educational disparities.

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)	<a href="#">State Broadband Task Forces, Commissions, or Authorities</a>		A resource discussing how states are forming broadband task forces, commissions, and authorities to expand digital access.
National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)	<a href="#">Teacher Prep Review on Strengthening Elementary Reading Instruction</a>		A report evaluating teacher preparation programs' effectiveness in teaching foundational reading skills.
National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)	<a href="#">Reading Foundations</a>		Guidelines and reviews of how teacher preparation programs cover evidence-based reading instruction.
National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)	<a href="#">Data Explorer tool</a>		This tool from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) provides data and insights on early childhood education policies and outcomes across the U.S.
National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)	<a href="#">State of Preschool</a>		This report provides an overview of the state of early childhood education in 2023, highlighting key findings and policy recommendations.
National Reading Panel	<a href="#">National Reading Panel Report: Teaching Children to Read</a>		A comprehensive review of evidence-based reading instruction methods from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
New AEEmerica	<a href="#">Policy Recommendations: Universal Pre-K</a>		A report advocating for policies to expand access to high-quality universal pre-kindergarten programs.
New York State Department of Health	<a href="#">First 1000 Days on Medicaid Initiative</a>		This initiative focuses on improving health outcomes for children in their first 1,000 days by enhancing Medicaid services and support.
Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse	<a href="#">Home-Based Home Visiting Programs</a>		This resource reviews home visiting programs that support early childhood development and parental guidance based on strong research evidence.
Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse	<a href="#">Perinatal Telehealth Services</a>		This policy analysis examines the impact and effectiveness of telehealth services for maternal and infant health care during the perinatal period.



Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
Results for America	<a href="#">Economic Mobility Catalogue</a>		A database of evidence-based strategies and programs aimed at improving outcomes in education, workforce development, and social policy.
Shanker Institute	<a href="#">Reading Reform Across America: A Survey of State Legislation</a>		A detailed analysis of reading instruction reforms and their impact on literacy education.
Smart Growth America	<a href="#">National Complete Streets Coalition</a>		This initiative advocates for transportation policies that ensure streets are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI)	<a href="#">Measuring Accessibility Report</a>		This report evaluates different methods for assessing transportation accessibility and its impact on economic and social outcomes.
StriveTogether	<a href="#">Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Data Guides: Early Grade Reading</a>		A framework for tracking and improving early-grade reading and long-term student success.
Strong Readers Strong Leaders, Mississippi	<a href="#">Know Your Child's Reading Score</a>		This website supports literacy initiatives in Mississippi, providing resources and advocacy to improve reading outcomes for students.
Susan B. Neuman and Donna C. Celano	<a href="#">Giving Our Children a Fighting Chance: Poverty, Literacy, and the Development of Information Capital</a>		This book discusses the role of poverty, literacy, and educational inequality in shaping children's futures and life opportunities.
Tennessee SCORE	<a href="#">The Science of Reading</a>		This document outlines research-backed principles and best practices for effective reading instruction based on the Science of Reading framework.
Tennessee SCORE	<a href="#">Literacy: Adopting Research-Based Strategies to Develop Young Readers</a>		This policy memo from SCORE details key literacy initiatives and strategies for improving reading proficiency among students.
The Right To Read (documentary film)	<a href="#">Film discussion guide</a>		This document provides a discussion guide to accompany "The Right to Read" film, focusing on literacy, educational equity, and systemic barriers to reading.

Organization	Publication	Included in E-W Framework	Description
TNTP	<a href="#">So All Students Thrive</a>		This publication explores strategies and policies aimed at ensuring educational success and equitable opportunities for all students.
Urban Institute	<a href="#">Upward Mobility Initiative</a>		This initiative provides data and policy insights to help communities advance economic mobility and reduce inequities.
Urban Institute	<a href="#">Promise Neighborhoods Project</a>		An initiative aimed at improving educational and community outcomes in high-poverty areas.



## B. Organizations or programs referenced

Organization	Publication	Description
Alliance for Early Success	<a href="#">Alliance for Early Success</a>	Provides resources, research, and policy recommendations to support early childhood education and development.
Attendance Works	<a href="#">Absences Add Up</a>	
Center for Policing Equity	<a href="#">Redesigning Public Safety for K-12 Schools</a>	
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)		
CAST's UDL Support for Multilingual Learners	<a href="#">CAST's UDL Support for Multilingual Learners</a>	A project exploring how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can be applied to support multilingual learners in diverse educational settings.
Day By Day Ohio	<a href="#">Family Literacy Calendar</a>	This literacy-focused resource provides daily activities, books, and songs to support early childhood learning.
Department of Homeland Security	<a href="#">Smart Cities</a>	The Department of Homeland Security discusses how smart technology is being used to enhance urban infrastructure, security, and resilience.

Organization	Publication	Description
<b>Emerging Bilingual Collaborative</b>	<a href="#"><u>Emerging Bilingual Collaborative</u></a>	An organization committed to supporting and advocating for the educational success of emerging bilingual students through collaborative efforts.
<b>Federal Communications Commission</b>	<a href="#"><u>Affordable Connectivity Program</u></a>	This FCC program provides discounts on internet services and devices to help low-income households access affordable broadband.
<b>Hello Family Spartanburg</b>	<a href="#"><u>Resources webpage</u></a>	A local initiative offering resources for families in Spartanburg, SC, including early childhood education, health, and family support programs.
<b>Hope Center for Children</b>	<a href="#"><u>Triple P Spartanburg: A Positive Parenting Program</u></a>	Hope CFC's Triple P program offers evidence-based parenting support to promote positive child development and reduce behavioral issues.
<b>LMU's Center for Equity for English Learners (CEEL)</b>	<a href="#"><u>LMU's Center for Equity for English Learners (CEEL)</u></a>	A center dedicated to promoting equity and excellence in the education of English learners through research, professional development, and policy advocacy.
<b>Minnesota Department of Education's READ Initiative</b>	<a href="#"><u>Minnesota Department of Education's READ Initiative</u></a>	A program aimed at improving reading proficiency among Minnesota students through evidence-based literacy practices.
<b>My Brother's Keeper Alliance</b>	<a href="#"><u>My Brother's Keeper</u></a>	A national program reducing exclusionary discipline and promoting equity for young men of color.
<b>National Association of Community and Restorative Justice</b>	<a href="#"><u>National Association of Community and Restorative Justice</u></a>	Restorative Justice in Schools: strategies for non-punitive discipline and fostering a positive school climate
<b>National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments</b>	<a href="#"><u>National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments</u></a>	The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) helps schools, districts, and institutions create safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments that promote student success. It offers research, tools, and technical assistance to address issues like school climate, mental health, and substance misuse. The center aims to improve conditions for learning and ensure all students thrive academically and socially.
<b>Neuhaus Education Center</b>	<a href="#"><u>Neuhaus Education Center</u></a>	A nonprofit organization offering evidence-based professional development and resources to educators for teaching reading, spelling, and writing.

Organization	Publication	Description
<b>Tennessee Department of Education</b>	<a href="#"><u>Tennessee Department of Education</u></a>	The Tennessee Department of Education supports early grades reading through its Reading 360 initiative, which provides training, resources, and phonics-based materials to educators and families. Key efforts include a 60-hour foundational literacy training for K–5 teachers, free decodable books for K–2 students, and tutoring through the TN ALL Corps’ Connected Literacy program. These initiatives aim to ensure all students are reading proficiently by third grade.
<b>The Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)</b>	<a href="#"><u>Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports</u></a>	The Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) supports schools, districts, and states in implementing a multi-tiered framework to improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students. It provides evidence-based practices, training, and resources to help create positive school climates and reduce disciplinary disparities.
<b>Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL)</b>	<a href="#"><u>Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL)</u></a>	An initiative focused on implementing research-based strategies to develop the language and literacy skills of English learners in early education.
<b>The National Equity Atlas</b>	<a href="#"><u>The National Equity Atlas</u></a>	
<b>Utah’s LETRS Fact Sheet</b>	<a href="#"><u>Utah’s LETRS Fact Sheet</u></a>	An overview of Utah’s implementation of the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning program to enhance educators’ knowledge in the Science of Reading.
<b>Vanderbilt University’s AdvancED Institute</b>	<a href="#"><u>Vanderbilt University’s AdvancED Institute</u></a>	An institute at Vanderbilt University focused on advancing higher education through research-backed innovations in pedagogy and student experience.
<b>WIC Works Resource System</b>	<a href="#"><u>WIC Works Resource System</u></a>	This USDA website offers information about the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and its impact.





## C. Background research

Organization	Publication	Description
Achieve the Core	<a href="#"><u>Reading Foundational Skills Key Concepts and Terms</u></a>	A glossary of key terms related to foundational literacy skills, helping educators understand essential concepts for early reading instruction.
Annie E. Casey Foundation	<a href="#"><u>Early Reading Research Confirmed: A Research Update on the Importance of Third-Grade Reading</u></a>	A follow up to 2010's "Early Warning", this report underscores the urgency of ensuring that children develop proficient reading skills by the end of third grade, especially those living in poverty or in impoverished communities.
Donald J. Hernandez and The Annie E. Casey Foundation	<a href="#"><u>Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation</u></a>	Examines the long-term impact of early reading proficiency, finding that children who struggle with reading by third grade —especially those from low-income backgrounds —are significantly more likely to drop out of high school.
Guo, Y., Sun, S., Breit-Smith, A., Morrison, F. J., & Connor, C. M. (2015).	<a href="#"><u>Behavioral engagement and reading achievement in elementary-school-age children: A longitudinal cross-lagged analysis.</u></a>	This study examines the relationship between behavioral engagement and reading achievement in elementary school. It shows that reading achievement in preschool predicted subsequent behavioral engagement in 1st grade and reading achievement in 3rd grade predicted subsequent behavioral engagement in 5th grade.
Internal Revenue Service	<a href="#"><u>Refundable tax credits</u></a>	The IRS provides information on refundable tax credits, which allow eligible taxpayers to receive money back even if they owe no taxes.
Lesnick, Joy; Goerge, Robert M.; Smithgall, Cheryl; Gwynne, Julia (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago)	<a href="#"><u>Reading on Grade Level in Third Grade: How Is It Related to High School Performance and College Enrollment?</u></a>	This study uses longitudinal administrative data to examine the relationship between third-grade reading level and four educational outcomes: eighth-grade reading performance, ninth-grade course performance, high school graduation, and college attendance.
No Kid Hungry, Center for Best Practices	<a href="#"><u>Afterschool Meals</u></a>	An overview of after school meal programs that aim to reduce food insecurity and support child nutrition in low-income communities.

Organization	Publication	Description
Prosperity Now	<a href="#"><u>Baby Bonds</u></a>	Prosperity Now outlines the concept of “Baby Bonds,” a policy proposal aimed at reducing wealth inequality by providing savings accounts for children at birth.
Sarah B Miles, Deborah Stipek	<a href="#"><u>Contemporaneous and longitudinal associations between social behavior and literacy achievement in a sample of low-income elementary school children</u></a>	This study investigates associations between social skills (aggression and prosocial behavior) and literacy achievement in a sample of low-income children (between 4 and 6 years old when the study began) during elementary school.
The Century Foundation	<a href="#"><u>Moving from Vision to Reality</u></a>	A report outlining strategies for California to become a national leader in bilingual education and dual-language immersion programs.
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The Nation’s Report Card	<a href="#"><u>Data Tools</u></a>	The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), first administered in 1969, is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation’s students know and can do in subjects such as mathematics, reading, science, and writing.
U.S. Census Bureau	<a href="#"><u>Quarterly Residential Vacancies and Homeownership, Fourth Quarter 2024</u></a>	This Census Bureau resource provides up-to-date statistics on housing vacancies and homeownership trends in the U.S.
U.S. Federal Reserve	<a href="#"><u>Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households</u></a>	This resource analyzes how unexpected expenses impact household financial stability and economic decision-making.
Wisconsin Act 20 FAQ	<a href="#"><u>Organization Website</u></a>	A document detailing the requirements of Wisconsin’s Act 20, which mandates universal and intervention reading instruction for students.





## StriveTogether®

Every child. Cradle to career.

StriveTogether is a national network of community partnerships that join together neighbors, including youth and families, nonprofits, businesses, schools and more, to work toward a future where youth can thrive in their communities. Cradle to Career Network members change the way their communities work together by building connections, sharing resources and using data to put more young people on a path to economic mobility. Our work helps young people meet seven key life milestones so that they have the opportunities they need to reach their goals, and, ultimately, thrive.

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